

HE SAID, SHE SAID: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPROACH AND
ACCOUNT BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT

A Thesis

by

GREGORY DENNIS PAUL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2006

Major Subject: Speech Communication

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,
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ABSTRACT

He Said, She Said: The Relationship between Reproach and Account Behavior in
Organizational Conflict. (August 2006)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda Putnam

Current research on account behavior has focused on responses to failure events in which one person is the victim and another is the transgressor. This study builds on this research by using a framing lens to examine account behavior in a conflict situation in which individuals are both actors and recipients of failures. After establishing the relationship between organizational conflict and failure events, the study explored the relationship between account behavior and three aspects of issue development framing: conflict naming, conflict blaming, and intentionality. Employees of nonprofit organizations were asked to read and respond to a vignette-based scenario depicting a conflict between two directors of a nonprofit organization. The research findings indicated that conflict framing was a significant predictor of account strategies. Specifically, the use of mitigating statements was more likely when the event was cast as intentional and the reproacher accepted blame. A clear interaction emerged between gender and conflict naming. In all, this research indicated that more attention should be paid to conflict framing when studying individuals' or corporations' use of account strategies.

DEDICATION

To Libby

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONFLICT AND FAILURE

Conflict seems to permeate Western culture (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Kolb & Putnam, 1992), particularly within organizations in which inherently different individuals are asked to work together in pursuit of common goals. Whether working properly or characterized by dysfunctional behaviors, strategies, and structures, organizations and workgroups inevitably face conflict (Kolb & Putnam; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000). Such conflict either facilitates change by allowing groups and the organization as a whole to adapt to their environment or tears the fabric of the organization's social networks (Putnam, 1988; Smith, 1966). Any organization would serve its purposes well to manage these natural conflicts effectively, particularly relational conflicts (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Volkema, Bergmann, & Farquhar, 1997; Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001; Putnam & Poole, 1987). Such effective management would allow an organization to preserve and strengthen relationships among its members (Putnam & Kolb, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to examine how individuals can pursue this goal of constructive conflict management. However, unlike other studies that approach interpersonal conflict in organizations primarily through an analysis of conflict styles, the focus here is on the ways that conflict framing relates to responses to the disputing

process. Specifically, this study aims to shed light on how perceptions of framing, intent, and locus of blame during a conflict episode shape reactions to conflict. This study draws on the dispute process (Morrill & Thomas, 1992) and the account process (Schonbach, 1980) literatures to examine how individuals react to other's conflict claims. Because the account process literature has focused on accounts following failure events, this study also draws on failure event research and its connection to organizational conflicts and disputes. This chapter focuses on organizational conflict and its antecedents, arguing that a combination of the conflict and failure event literatures leads to a more complete understanding of the conflict process.

Conflict

Putnam and Poole (1987) define conflict as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive the opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals” (p. 552). This definition highlights a number of important attributes. First, interaction provides the foundation for conflict. Communication strategies provide clues to understand how each party attempts to manage the conflict (Putnam & Wilson, 1982). Interaction also implies that conflict is a process that develops over time (Knapp et al., 1988; Thomas, 1976), growing from a single action into a series of actions by all involved (Goldman, Paddock, & Cropanzano, 2004). Second, individuals in conflict are interdependent with each other. This interdependence helps to explain how conflict emerges from individuals' reactions to each other. Interdependence also points to the inherent importance of relationships within conflict.

Third, conflict is grounded in perception. Each party views the conflict through a unique set of lenses, opening the possibility for different interpretations of the same situation. These divergent perceptions, in fact, may help to explain why conflict arises and grows in the first place (Bartunek, Kolb, & Lewicki, 1992). Finally, conflict is marked by the perception of interference with the achievement of various goals, values, or aims. These goals may be oriented toward task responsibilities or relational wants. Goals may include the desire to be seen as equal or to be treated with respect. Values may include societal norms to which an individual adheres. In all, conflict is a communicative process in which interdependent individuals perceive a frustration, caused by another party, in achieving certain goals.

Conflict Characteristics

At least two types of conflicts can be identified within an organization (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Task conflict centers on content and/or substance-related issues. Such conflicts may involve the inability to complete a task, the inability to obtain necessary resources with which to carry out a responsibility, or the interference of an individual in another's attempt to do her or his job. Relational conflicts result from interpersonal incompatibilities and interpretations. Though they are treated as two distinct dimensions, the two are difficult to separate (Knapp et al., 1988). Much like task and relational responsibilities within groups, these types are difficult to treat as two distinct areas (Keyton, 1999). That is, task conflict often carries with it relationship frustrations. Likewise, relational incompatibility may spring from frustrations with task

performance. Regardless of categorization, though, organizational conflict is shaped by a number of factors (Putnam & Poole, 1987).

One important factor encompasses relationship variables. These variables, such as interdependence and organizational status, have been studied frequently as they relate to conflict management. As mentioned above, interdependence of the parties refers to the way that each party's behaviors are dependent on the other party. Reciprocation of behaviors, as discussed previously, is but one example of this interdependence (McLaughlin, Cody, & O'Hair, 1983). Individuals are mindful of the other party's behaviors and conceptualizations of issues and respond to those behaviors.

Conflict variables are also important in shaping how the conflict develops (Putnam & Poole, 1987). These variables include source, frequency, topic, and importance. Although the last three variables are important considerations, source is of particular importance because it represents a possible site for attribution of causality and intent (Sillars, 1980a; Sillars, 1980b). Thomas and Pondy (1977) argue that source attribution is an "existential assumption" (p. 1091). They argue that attribution of agency (i.e., identification of the conflict's source) is an integral part of the conflict process. Of course, tied in with source identification is attribution of intent (Weiner, 1985; Thomas & Pondy). Attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Weiner; Sillars 1980a; Sillars, 1980b) argues that individuals look for agency (i.e., causality), control (i.e., intent), and expected outcomes and behaviors when assessing blame for the conflict. Thus, assessments of intentionality are coupled with assessments of the conflict's source. Individual attribution is a key component in how conflicts emerge.

Disputing Process

Morrill and Thomas (1992) echo the view of seeing conflict as a process. Though they are focused more on how *legal disputes* develop within organizations, their argument is still useful for examining how conflicts begin and develop. They argue that conflicts begin with a *grievance*. A grievance occurs when “a person or group reacts to a real or perceived violation of a set of norms, rules, or individual or societal standards” (p. 404). This definition reinforces the importance of interaction within conflict as discussed above. Also important to a conflict is the set of goals, aims, and values that were violated. This definition of grievance shares many of the same assumptions of the definition of conflict. One party communicates with another party about the other’s role in blocking the other person’s attainment of a certain goal. Such blockage may represent a violation of norms of equality or respect, or may violate rules of teamwork and cooperation. Regardless of the nature of the conflict, the frustration of goals seems consistent with the violation of norms.

Morrill and Thomas (1992) argue that a conflict may ensue after the grievance stage when there is an “exchange of grievances either directly or indirectly” (p. 404). That is, conflict ensues when the other party responds to the one who presented the grievance. This characteristic places a key importance on the discursive nature of conflict, in which parties respond to the claims (grievances) of the other regarding the perceived violation of goals, aims, or values. This interaction highlights the interdependence of each party’s grievances. As discussed previously, each party usually

manages the conflict by responding to what the other said previously. Such responses provide a rich site for understanding the evolution of conflict (Morrill & Thomas, 1992).

Of course, missing from this discussion of conflict is how conflicts develop and subside. Although the conflict management literature addresses this point, it does not do so from an attribution standpoint. For that, the body of literature on failure events might prove more helpful. This study, though, does not examine the entire dispute process; rather, it focuses on the presentation of a grievance. The following section establishes the connection between the two bodies of literature to set out a general theory for ebb and flow of organizational conflict.

Failure Events and Conflict

The current literature on strategies such as apologies (e.g., Schlenker, 1980) is founded on individuals' responses to failure events, defined as "deviant acts committed and obligations omitted" (Schonbach, 1980, p. 105). This definition highlights some key characteristics. First, the definition does not exclude accidents from being considered failure events. Such attributions of intent are left to the individual perceiving the commission or omission. Second, the definition implies that failure events may include departures from socially-accepted norms or behaviors. That is, acts may *deviate* from what society has constructed as the proper action or the proper line of thought. Finally, both action and inaction may be considered failures. Again, the perceiver must discern whether or not the actor¹ engaged in a failure.

¹ Although the current literature has largely used "transgressor" and "victim" to refer to the parties to a failure event, the labels imply that a single party is at fault. As was argued above, conflict involves the exchange of grievances by more than one party. Frequently, conflict arises as a result of more than one person engaging in a failure event, resulting in the likelihood that a person may be both transgressor and

Definition of a Failure Event

A failure event may alter the way the recipient perceives not only the relationship with the actor but also the actor's identity (Schlenker, 1980; Goffman, 1971). As Hupka, Jung, and Silverthorn (1987) argue, "The socially inappropriate behavior of one of the partners may interfere not only with the image that the offending partner seeks to present, but also with the image that the innocent partner wants to maintain about himself or herself, and the image that both wish to convey about the quality of their relationship" (p. 304). As a result, the failure extends from the specific action to the relationship between both parties.

Of course, central to a failure event is perception. Goffman (1971) argues for the centrality of perception and alignment when he breaks the failure episode into a virtual offense, virtual offender, and virtual claimant. This terminology connotes that the perception of the offense (i.e., failure event) – an imagination of the act's "worst possible reading" – is central to how the offense is handled. Thus, a failure event is not inherently a failure. Rather, the receiver must judge the action to be deviant or irresponsible.

A failure event, then, is that which the recipient perceives to be an act counter to expectations of propriety or obligation. How, though, is a failure event similar to a grievance or conflict episode? Though the literatures have yet to be combined in

victim. As a result, this study intentionally avoids the use of such labels. Instead, the individual engaging in the referenced action is termed the "actor," whereas the person on the receiving end of the action is termed the "recipient" or the "other."

previous literature, the concepts share similarities on many levels. The following section outlines the coherent fit between failure and conflict.

Failure as a Precursor to Conflict

A primary similarity between a conflict episode and a failure event is the centrality of perception for each. Conflict is predicated on an individual's perception that another is frustrating his or her ability to achieve certain goals. It is immaterial whether or not the other actually *is* frustrating the achievement. If the individual understands the other to be doing so, a conflict may ensue. Failure events operate in much the same way. For example, Felstiner, Abel, and Sarat (1980-1981) differentiate between "perceived injurious events" and "unperceived injurious events." Those events not perceived as injurious do not develop into disputes, whereas those events perceived to be injurious do. In much the same way, those acts not perceived to be deviant or irresponsible will not be seen as failures, but as something else. The key is that the recipient of the action must determine whether an act rises (or sinks, as the case may be) to the definition of failing. For both conflict episodes and failure events then, perception is a central characteristic.

A second similarity is based on perception. Both conflicts and failures may be perceived as either intentional or unintentional. Putnam and Poole's (1987) definition of conflict did not imply that an act must be intentional in order to initiate a conflict. Rather, assessments of intentionality emerge only *after* the initiating event. Thus, a conflict episode may be based on an accidental or intentional act of interference by the actor. Similarly, a failure event may be either intentional or accidental. A manager, for

instance, must decide whether her assistant's failure to place a necessary phone call was accidental (i.e., forgetful) or intentional (i.e., subordination). Of course, attribution of intent can be constructed and reconstructed through interaction.

A third similarity between a conflict episode and a failure event is that each communicates an opposition to goals or norms. The very definition of conflict used here asserts that conflict involves the perceived frustration of the achievement of goals, aims, and/or values. That is, the parties perceive that another is blocking them from carrying out duties or desires. Morrill and Thomas' (1992) definition of a grievance also points to the centrality of perceived norms or rules in a conflict. Conflicting parties tend to assign labels of right or wrong, moral or immoral to each other's actions (Pearce & Littlejohn (1997). A failure event carries similar value connotations. A failure may signal a disregard for socially accepted norms (Goffman, 1971) or disrupt the assumed equality of the parties' relationship (Taft, 2000; Bolstad, 2000). That is, actors blamed for a failure are perceived as not sharing values of equality and moral integrity, not pursuing socially accepted norms, and not being interested in goals that could potentially help the other party. Both a conflict episode and a failure event, then, have moral qualities assigned to them by the parties and signal an opposition (whether intentional or not) to goals or norms.

A fourth similarity lies in the interactive foundation of each. Conflict is naturally communicative. Each party socially constructs his or her view of the other's actions and the frustrated goals, aims, or values. Each party communicates a grievance to the other, either verbally or nonverbally (i.e., avoiding the other). Each party's action may be

perceived as communicating a disregard for the other's desire to achieve a certain goal. Similarly, a failure event communicates a disregard for the recipient by the actor. A failure event may very well signal that a relationship is no longer important or that the way the recipient had viewed the actor was a mistake (Schlenker, 1980; Goffman). Although *what* is communicated may differ depending on each recipient's perception, the fact remains that a failure event communicates a message of intentional or accidental opposition. This communication, then, points to the fit of a failure event into a conflict episode.

According to Morrill and Thomas (1992), the dispute process begins when one person brings a grievance to the attention of another. Understood in this process is that some event occurred which one party perceived as a violation of social norms or rules. That violation is a failure event. As argued above, despite the variance in wordings, a failure event essentially communicates a divergence of values, norms, or goals. A failure event, then, is seen as a violation of the recipient's perception of what is proper (i.e., obligatory, and not deviant). Thus, a failure event is what initiates the conflict process by which one party (the recipient) brings a grievance to actor. That actor may then respond by bringing a grievance against the recipient, thus creating a conflict which must be managed by both parties with various strategies.

Summary

Although not previously merged, conflicts and failure events seem to have a coherent fit with each other. Much as conflict is based on the perceptions of interdependent parties attempting to accomplish certain goals, a failure event is what

initiates the conflict by communicating a divergent set of norms, rules, and responsibilities. Now that the connection between the two bodies of literature has been established, the remainder of this literature review is dedicated to exploring the role of communicated responses to a confrontation in a conflict episode as seen through the lenses of framing.

Chapter II discusses framing and responses to failure events in depth. The chapter demonstrates the connection between issue development framing and the account phase while hypothesizing relationships between the differences in issue definition and the use of certain accounts. Chapter III lays out the methodology used to test the hypotheses by discussing participants, research material, pilot tests, and statistical tests. Chapter IV presents the detailed results broken down by the independent variables of naming, intentionality, blaming, and gender. Finally, Chapter V discusses those results and offers possible future directions of communicative research on account strategies during conflict.

CHAPTER II

FRAMING CONFLICT WITH ACCOUNTS

The importance of communication in the evolution of conflict is hard to overestimate. A key strategy which parties use in conflict is framing (Putnam & Holmer, 1992; Gray, 2003; DeWulf, 2005; Felstiner et al., 1980-81; Benford & Snow, 2000; Drake & Donohue, 1996). By casting the conflict in a specific light, parties attempt to manage the conflict in various ways. The following review briefly examines the role of framing in conflict situations. The review pays special attention to issue development framing as a way to understand how a failure event may grow into conflict.

Conflict Framing

Scholars define framing in a variety of ways, depending on their approaches to conflict episodes. Gray (2003) defines framing as a “process of constructing and representing our interpretations of the world around us” (p. 11). Frames of reference enable parties in conflict to construct and reconstruct interpretations of the issues at hand and make sense of the situation (Putnam & Holmer, 128). Framing is an active process which is purposefully undertaken by all parties involved (Benford & Snow, 2000), indicating that parties are aware of framing strategies and desired goals. Because framing can be identified in a number of ways, the study of conflict framing has taken a number of directions.

Putnam and Holmer (1992) identify three approaches to frame analysis: cognitive heuristics, frame categories, and issue development. Cognitive heuristics is primarily concerned with how a party perceives a given situation in terms of gains and losses

(Putnam & Holmer; Drake & Donohue, 1996). Research using this framing lens is interested in how concessions and trade-offs within a negotiation are related to perceptions of risk. Perception, in turn, is affected by the parties' personal characteristics, normative beliefs, and habits (Putnam & Holmer, 1992). Framing appears to be concentrated on the task at hand. The frame categories approach (Gray, 1997; Gray, 2003) is primarily concerned with analyzing dominant frames used by various parties to organize their views of the situation. According to this cognitive approach, conflict escalates and de-escalates based on frame matching. Researchers would then focus on the frame type used by the parties to ascertain the likelihood of conflict emergence or abatement. A final approach, issue development, focuses on the evolution of parties' perceptions of the conflict during social interaction (Putnam & Holmer, 1992; Drake & Donohue, 1996; Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1980-1981). Researchers using this approach are interested in how the parties define and redefine the conflict issues.

Although there are a variety of approaches to framing, each identifies a number of common themes. First, framing is an active exercise. Individuals have a certain level of awareness when constructing how they view a particular situation. Individuals put forth varying amounts of effort to construct their particular worldviews. Second, by treating framing as a process, framing is not seen as static. Rather, it is shaped and reshaped by the other's responses. Third, an interpretive view of framing accounts for the existence of multiple meanings of a single situation. Differences in interpretations

indicate an increased likelihood of the persistence of the conflict. In all, framing is an active way of constructive meaning of a given situation.

Framing's impact on conflict management is hard to underestimate. In developing their communicative framing theory, which draws on speech act theory, negotiated order theory, and communication accommodation theory, Drake and Donohue (1996) conducted an analysis of framing effects in mediation. They argue that framing can be an integrative or distributive process depending on whether or not parties converge toward or diverge away from each other's definition of the conflict issues. Their study includes a frame categories approach (i.e., factual, relational, value, and interest frames) within the issue development framework. They observed that individuals were most likely to use factual frames (appraisals of reality) and least likely to use value frames (moral foundations of right and wrong) to advance their definitions of the situation. Parties were almost equally likely to employ interest (future desires and goals) and relational frames (emotional ties between the parties). They argue that frame convergence is a significant predictor of positive conflict management. This study employs two of these frame categories within the issue development approach to discover the relationships between category types and responses to confrontation.

For the purposes of this study, examining responses to conflict through an issue development lens is most beneficial. Cognitive heuristics does not examine how definitions of issues may influence another's definition of the issues. Although frame type might be beneficial, its assumption of cognition does not suggest a focus on the influence of social interaction on issue definition. Issue development, though, argues

that individuals construct their perceptions of a conflict on a number of levels, and then communicate those perceptions to the other party. Although similar to frame category analysis, issue development examines not the convergence of frame *type* but the creation of mutual *definitions* of the conflict episode. It may be possible, for instance, for parties to use the same frame category but be in conflict on how to define the exact issues being considered. In addition to examining the way issues are defined, issue development examines how relational issues are cast and recast through the parties' interaction. This lens, therefore, analyzes how parties interact on substantive and relational issues and how those issues, in turn, shape conflict. This study uses issue development to examine the differences in how people respond to messages framed and defined differently. Framing, as used here, refers not to the responses of the participants, but to the message to which the participants are responding.

Table 1 Issue Development Definitions (Felstiner et al., 1980-81)

Component	Definition
Naming	Determination of an action to be injurious or non-injurious
Blaming	Determination of responsibility for the action
Claiming	Presentation of the event to the one perceived to be responsible
Explaining	Accounting by the actor for the event

As shown in Table 1, individuals define issues through a three-step process of naming, blaming, and claiming in the development of disputes (Felstiner et al., 1980-81). The first step – naming – involves the recipient determining whether or not an action is injurious (a “perceived injurious event” versus an “unperceived injurious experience”). In addition to the naming of an action as an injury (or *failure event*, as shown above), the naming step also involves determining the definition of the action (Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992; Lewicki, Saunders, Barry, & Minton, 2003). Sheppard et al. suggest that defining the action is akin to “framing” it in different ways (such as relationally or factually). Because individuals may name an event differently depending on their position as actor or recipient (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1997) or their relationship with the other, the naming process may account for why certain similar actions are viewed as injuries and violations by some and not by others. Once the event has been named in injury or failure, the injury may evolve into a grievance after the recipient proceeds to the blaming stage (Sheppard et al.).

Blaming entails the determination of two issues: intentionality and agency (Weiner, 1985; Sheppard et al., 1992; Felstiner et al., 1980-81; Thomas & Pondy, 1977; Sillars, 1980a; Sillars 1980b). As discussed previously, attribution theory argues that individuals attempt to perceive who was responsible for the action (i.e., who was the agent), and whether or not that person or object engaged in the action intentionally or accidentally. The theory argues that individuals have a basic motivation to understand the underlying causes of any event, which moves them to attribute causality to individuals, groups, systems, etc. Allred (2000) offers a fairly comprehensive discussion

of the implications of attribution on conflict episodes. He identifies three attribution biases that may play a role in interpersonal conflict: the fundamental attribution error, accuser bias, and the actor-observer bias. The fundamental attribution error (McLaughlin et al., 1983), similar to the accuser bias, involves the tendency to attribute a person's behavior to bad intentions or personality rather than to circumstances. However, the actor-observer bias involves the tendency for the person accused to attribute his or her behavior to circumstances rather than internal reasons. In other words, individuals are not very likely to agree on what or whom to blame depending on their roles in the situation (Baumeister et al., 1997; Sillars, 1980b).

Recipients are much more likely to blame others for a failure than to blame themselves (Goldman, Paddock, & Cropanzano, 2004; Sillars, 1980b). They are typically hesitant to blame a system unless there is significant and compelling evidence to do so (Goldman et al.; Sheppard et al., 1992). If they perceive that they are to blame, they are more likely to attribute the action to situations outside of their control (Heider, 1958). If the recipient experienced a similar event in the past, that experience may help to determine who is blamed and whether or not the action is perceived to be intentional or accidental (Worthington, 1997; McLaughlin et al., 1983). In all, the blaming stage of a dispute, individuals assess the intentionality and agency on the part of the recipient.

After the failure event has been named injurious and has been blamed on someone or some object, the recipient usually brings a claim against the actor. During this stage, the recipient presents his or her perceptions and definitions of the issues at hand. Though Felstiner et al. did not account for the actor's response (because their

model was more linear and focused on the recipient), this response makes up the critical “explanation” period. Each party is able to respond to the other’s perceptions by offering an explanation for the actions and by framing the other’s actions strategically (Goldman et al.; Sheppard et al.). During this stage, the salience of different frame types ebbs and flows depending on the goals of the speaker. How the parties respond, in turn, works to re-construct how the event is named and whom each blames.

Framing and the Evolution of Conflict

Issue development framing emerges as an attempt to explain how perceived injurious experiences develop from grievances to disputes. Recall that the previous chapter on conflict and failure events uses Morrill and Thomas’ (1992) model of dispute development as a lens through which to view the relationship between a failure event and a conflict episode. A failure represents the action which leads to a grievance between actor and recipient. Conflict ensues when the parties exchange grievances. The issue development framework is a useful lens through which to examine this process.

A failure event is an action perceived by the recipient to violate social norms and frustrate the recipient’s desire to achieve certain goals or aims. Once the recipient perceives the action, that recipient immediately decides whether or not that action is a failure. In other words, the recipient determines whether or not she or he was injured by the action. The recipient also attempts to define the action using any number of frames or lenses at her or his disposal. The event may be viewed in terms of its objective characteristics (a factual frame), its impact on the relationship between the actor and recipient (a relational frame), its impact on futures goals (an interest frame), and/or its

rightness or wrongness (a value frame). For instance, when a superior learns that her assistant failed to make an important phone call, she may define the failure in any number of ways. She may view the failure as a direct neglect of duties and may examine the various responsibilities the assistant had for the day (a factual frame). She may understand the conflict in terms of her emotions of frustration or exasperation with her assistant (a relational frame). She may examine the failure as possibly having allowed a lucrative deal to have fallen through the cracks, and thereby costing the manager a chance at a promotion (an interest frame). She may also think of the event in terms of the wrongness of the act (a value frame). Recipients are not restricted to using only one frame with which to define an event. Rather, they often use a variety of frames, typically using one as a dominant lens (Drake & Donohue, 1996). The naming stage, then, represents the time during which an action is named a failure by the recipient.

If the event is not named a failure, conflict does not develop because no frustration occurred. However, if the recipient perceives the event to be a violation, the person progresses to the blaming stage. Here, he or she attempts to discern who the actor was and whether or not the action was intentional or accidental. In the case of the forgotten phone call, the manager must discern who forgot the phone call and whether or not the omission was intentional. She can examine a number of factors. For instance, if she forgot to tell her assistant, the manager might blame herself or – more likely – the busy-ness of the day's activities. She may also blame a systemic problem – such as the crash of the organization's electronic mail system – for failing to get the message to her assistant. Finally, she may blame the assistant for neglecting her responsibilities. All

the while, the manager is determining level of culpability. If the manager perceives herself to be the one to blame, she will most likely see her actions as accidental. If she perceives the e-mail system is to blame, she may attribute it to “bad luck” (unintentional) or to the laziness of the organization’s technicians (intentional). If attributed to the assistant, the manager may look back into their history of working together to discern whether or not the assistant had forgotten to make previous phone calls. If not, the manager may see the failure as an unintentional mistake; if so, the manager may be more likely to see the failure as controllable (and thus, intentional). The blaming activity is thus a crucial period in the development of a failure event into a conflict (Felstiner et al., 1980-81).

Once the recipient has named and blamed a conflict individually, the person may finally present his or her perceptions to the other party. Morrill and Thomas define this as the “grievance” or claiming of the conflict. The manager, for example, would ask the assistant into her office to explain that she was disappointed in the person’s mistake. The recipient’s definition of the conflict is presented to the actor for the first time when this occurs. After the grievance has been presented, the actor may respond and attempt to explain the situation. Here is where conflict may ensue. If the assistant has a grievance with the manager, that grievance would be presented, marking the emergence of conflict between the parties. Thus, though the manager may have been upset with her assistant, conflict did not emerge until a grievance (or claim) was asserted. The assistant may respond to that grievance with a number of rhetorical strategies designed to manage the superior’s impression of him or her (Coombs, 1995; Benoit & Brinson, 1994).

The issue development framework provides a useful lens for examining how a failure event escalates into a conflict episode. The conflict is socially constructed as the recipient engages in naming, blaming, and claiming. Thus far, though, the process has been examined from only the recipient's "field of vision" (Follett, 1942, as cited in Putnam & Holmer, 1992). It is important to remember that the actor is also most likely actively framing the event in his or her mind as well. Much as the recipient attempts to discern whether an action represents a failure and who (or what) is to blame for that failure, the actor also attempts to define the action and cast responsibility for it. If conflict ensues, the actor asserts his or her definition of the issues. The two parties then attempt either to persuade each other to change his or her definitions or to integrate the definitions, or to develop mutual explanations together.

As disputants explain a conflict, verbal strategies called "accounts" are given (Goffman, 1971). Accounts represent an active attempt to counter perceptions of wrongdoing and alter blameworthiness. Accounts are impression management tools used in crisis situations (e.g., Benoit & Brinson; Coombs) or failure events. The following section examines the current literature on accounts as responses to failure events. It is important to note that the current research has largely focused on the actor's responses to a failure. This study, though, is interested in how accounts are shaped by the recipient's grievance brought against the actor. This study uses the current account literature to hypothesize a number of relationships with account strategies based on naming and blaming.

Failure Accounts

Scott and Lyman (1968) define an account as “a statement by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior – whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the approximate cause for the statement arises from the actors himself or from someone else” (p. 46). Though the wordings are different, the “unanticipated or untoward behavior” represents a failure event. Untoward behavior, for instance, may signify a behavior which deviates from accepted norms or frustrates the recipient’s attempts to accomplish a specific goal. Accounts are typically required when a person violates a social norm by committing a failure (Fraser, 1981; Goffman, 1971; Schonbach, 1990; Schonbach, 1980). This failure brings what Schonbach terms an account episode, in which a failure is followed by a reproach phase and an account phase before moving to an evaluation phase. During the evaluation phase, the recipient judges the integrity and satisfaction of the account.

Account episodes share many similarities with issue development framing, as seen in Figure 1. Once an individual names an event as a problem and blames it on another person, the individual brings his or her claim to that other person in reproach. After the grievance has been submitted, the actor offers an account of the situation. The claimant evaluates the effectiveness of that account. If judged satisfactory (i.e., appropriate and competent), the account episode ends; otherwise, the parties continue to interact and potentially reframe their views of the situation by developing a collective account.

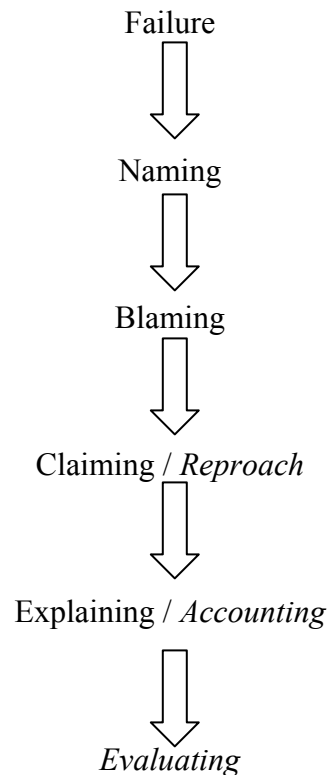


Figure 1 Framing and Accounting Processes

Account Types

Accounts are similar in that they are performative speech acts (Austin, 1962). In other words, accounts communicate more than whether something is true or false; they are active strategies that constantly frame a party's definition of the situation. Although Goffman (1971) and Schlenker initially separate remedial strategies into accounts and apologies, other scholars (e.g., Schonbach, 1980; Coombs, 1995; Benoit & Brinson, 1994) provide a more comprehensive taxonomy of accounts. Schonbach based his account categorization system, shown in Table 2, on that proposed by Sykes and Matza (1957) and Scott and Lyman. Accounts are similar in that they can be ordered on an aggravating-mitigating continuum (McLaughlin et al., 1983; Holtgraves, 1989;

Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992). The most aggravating accounts represent the largest threat to the hearer's face and are most likely if a party perceives "the entire self as bad and...exposed" (Exline & Baumeister, 2000, p. 142). The most mitigating accounts represent the least threat to the hearer's face. Schonbach's system separates four account types into these categories: refusals, justifications, excuses, and concessions.

Table 2 Account Definitions (Gonzales et al., 1992)

Account	Definition
Refusal	Denial of responsibility or right to approach
Justification	Acceptance of responsibility and recasting of the action as not as bad as was thought
Excuse	Acknowledgment of the offense and confession of <i>partial</i> responsibility
Concession	Acknowledgment of the offense and confession of responsibility

Parties use refusals to deny responsibility for the transgression or its consequences. Essentially, when an actor uses a refusal, he or she is arguing that there is nothing to be explained and/or that he or she is not to be blamed. Refusals are considered to be the most aggravating account strategy (Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; Gonzales et al., 1992; McLaughlin et al., 1983). In terms of issue

development, the individual providing the account disagrees with the other party on naming and blaming. Although the reproacher (i.e., the recipient of the action) believes that a failure occurred, a refusal communicates the belief that no failure occurred. Second, a refusal indicates that the actor is not to blame for the event, thus communicating a divergence on the issue of blame. Finally, as stated above, a refusal asserts that the claim is illegitimate and unfounded. Thus, the use of refusals by the actor aggravates the other party through divergence on naming and blaming the conflict. When refusals are used, the conflict continues to spiral until one or both sides alter their definitions of the situation (Allred, 2000).

Justifications are a second type of aggravating account (Gonzales et al., 1992; Gonzales et al., 1990). An actor uses a justification to accept responsibility for an action but to deny that the action was a failure. For example, an individual might assert that the claimant is “making a mountain out of a molehill” or even that the claimant *benefited* from the event. Justifications communicate divergence in naming the event. The reproacher views the situation as a failure event, whereas the actor does not. In light of this, it may be a mischaracterization to say that the two parties agree on blaming, because the actor does not believe that he or she should be *blamed* at all. Rather, because the event is not a failure, the accounter does not mind taking responsibility for it. Thus, both refusals and justifications are aggravating because they signal issue divergence on naming and blaming the situation.

Excuses are much less of a threat to the hearer’s face than the previous two accounts. A person using an excuse acknowledges the failure event while at the same

time attempting to lessen the amount of blame. Most people attribute at least partial blame to outside circumstances rather than to personal bad intention (McLaughlin et al., 1983). Someone may assert that he or she “did not mean to do it” or that he or she was not aware that the other person would be hurt. Excuses communicate to the recipient that his or her definition of the situation is correct and that the attribution of blame is at least partially correct. That is, excuses communicate more convergence than do refusals and justifications. Parties agree that a failure event occurred, thus agreeing on naming the situation as a problem. Parties also agree that the accounter is to blame, even though they partially diverge on the *level* of blame. Finally, parties agree that the claim is legitimate.

The most mitigating account type, concessions are “moves that in various ways admit blame for inflicting harm upon another” (Holtgraves, 1989, p. 2). Although the term “concession” and “apology” are frequently used interchangeably in the accounts literature, all concessions are not apologies. Rather, as Schonbach’s typology illustrates, concessions can come in the form of offering restitution, asking for forgiveness, browbeating oneself, etc. Concessions are typically seen as the most mitigating because they attend the most to the other’s face needs (Holtgraves; Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Yokochi, Masumoto, & Takai, 2000). Much like justifications and excuses can be differentiated based on how each defines the situation, excuses and concessions differ based on how each assigns blame. Concessions communicate convergence of naming, blaming, and claiming. As Tavuchis (1991) argues, “apologetic discourse presupposes

cognitive and evaluative congruence in the form of shared definitions of the violation, its severity, history, and implications” (pp. 57-58).

Concessions do not always occur in “pure” forms (Holtgraves). Often (over 50%) they are coupled with excuses to manage the faces of both the actor and recipient. The recipient typically accepts both strategies at similar rates (42.5% for apologies and 41.1% for excuses) (Braaten et al., 1993). Both accounts may be acceptable because they signal a convergence of issue definitions. Concessions may be accepted at a slightly greater rate because they communicate slightly more frame convergence on blaming. Use of a concession signals that the two parties may share aims, goals, or values, thus indicating congruence on the moral and relational aspects of the conflict (Alter, 1999; Taft, 2000; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

All in all, individuals use accounts in conflict situations for a variety of reasons. This study is primarily concerned with the ways that accounts function as issue development and conflict framing. This investigation is not necessarily concerned with effects of organizational status, offense severity, and other variables that effect accounts. Rather, it is primarily concerned with the effects of naming, blaming, and claiming on account type. Specifically, this study focuses on how changes in naming and blaming definitions are related to the likelihood of using certain types of accounts. Therefore, the remainder of this section examines each variable, including gender, and offers hypotheses on the relationship between issue definitions and use of accounts. Naming, blaming, and gender are the independent variables; the use of mitigating accounts and the use of aggravating accounts are the dependent variables, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Independent and Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
Naming	Use of mitigating accounts
Factual Frame	Concession
Relational Frame	Excuse
Intentionality	Use of aggravating accounts
Intentional	Justification
Accidental	Refusal
Locus of blame	
Other (respondent as actor)	
Self (vignette-writer as recipient)	
Board	
Respondent gender	
Male	
Female	

Accounting for Naming

Research on naming's effect on accounting behavior is sparse. Only Drake and Donohue (1996) come close to this arena. They note that, "frame congruence itself is more critical to integrative conflict resolution than the use of any one particular frame" (p. 314). Their apparent purpose was to examine final frame congruence rather than account behavior. Their research indicates that frame type is not positively correlated

with successful conflict management. They point out that Donohue, Lyles, and Rogan (1989) observed a prevalence of relational (and value) frames in failed divorce mediations. One explanation for this observation is that relational frames are more personal and emotional than factual frames. Another explanation is that parties may be able to agree on more (objective) factual information than on their (subjective) views of relationship quality. In the end, the use of a factual frame may give disputants a better chance to elicit a mitigating response than does the use of relational frames. Because individuals generate their own views of what makes a relationship “good” or “bad,” they may be less likely to admit that they are wrong about a relationship. As a result, a conflict viewed through a relational lens may elicit more aggravating than mitigating accounts.

H 1a: Individuals will be more likely to use mitigating accounts if the conflict is framed factually rather than relationally by the recipient.

H 1b: Individuals will be more likely to use aggravating accounts if the conflict is framed relationally rather than factually by the recipient.

Accounting for Blaming

Just as a conflict’s definition might elicit different account types from an actor, a recipient’s assessment of the actor’s agency is likely to alter which accounts the actor uses. As noted above, individuals attempt to ascertain both agency and intentionality when assigning blame. This section examines the relationship between perceived agency and account type.

Research in this area has been extensive. McLaughlin et al. (1983) observed that actors who felt guilt about a predicament tended to use more concessions than when they felt wrongly accused. In the case of the latter, actors were more likely to use silence (i.e., ignore the other's claim) and refusals. Schlenker and Darby (1982) observed that individuals who felt guilt about an offense tended to offer more concessions than any other account type. However, the direct relationship between mitigation and agency may not be present. For example, some researchers (Gonzales et al., 1992; Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996) observed that actors who perceived themselves to be highly responsible tended to show "an increased willingness to use aggravating techniques (Hodgins et al., p. 306). Individuals who felt a low to moderate level of blame tended to use more mitigating accounts. In all, the research *tends* to show that people will mitigate the situation when they perceive that they are at fault. However, those findings are contradicted by other studies showing the opposite results.

In a conflict situation in which many failures occurred and both individuals may be at fault (Kottler, 1994), both parties have a legitimate opportunity to assign blame to each other. It seems likely that justifications and refusals will be more prevalent in conflict situations in which the recipient blames the actor for two reasons. First, use of a mitigating account is essentially an admission of guilt. The actor may be unwilling to admit guilt if he or she believes that the other party is also guilty. Second, the actor-observer bias may influence parties to blame something or someone else if they perceive themselves to be guilty. As a result, they may use fewer concessions and excuses in a conflict. Sillars (1980a, 1980b), for example, observed that actors were more likely to

use avoidance and distributive strategies when the recipient blamed him or her.

Distributive strategies generally are equated with use of aggravating types of accounts.

Thus, it seems fairly evident that blaming the other party will predict a higher frequency of aggravating account use.

The account literature, though, does not address what accounts the actor will use if the recipient blames himself or a third party. From the available research, it seems that actors would use more mitigating accounts if the recipient blames himself. The shift of responsibility allows the actor freedom to reciprocate acceptance of blame. Even though he did not examine account use, Sillars (1980a) observed an increased likelihood of integrative conflict management strategies when the recipient blamed him or her self. This observation supports the hypothesis that blaming oneself will be associated with a greater use of mitigating accounts. Likewise, a similar accounting behavior seems likely to occur if the recipient blames a third party or a system. The shift in agency from the recipient to a third party also indicates that the recipient does not blame the actor. Thus, the actor is likely to use the excuse given to him or her by the recipient, while at the same time offering concessions for the behaviors at issue.

H 2a: Individuals will be most likely to use aggravating accounts when they are blamed by the recipient, and least likely to do so when the recipient either accepts blame or blames a third party.

H 2b: Individuals will be least likely to use mitigating accounts when they are blamed by the recipient, and most likely to do so when the recipient either accepts blame or blames a third party.

Accounting for Intentionality

Of course, assessments of intentionality are intertwined with judgments of agency. Although the judgments of intent do not alter whether or not a failure has taken place (Gonzales et al., 1992), they allow the recipient to discern how to respond to that failure. It is too simplistic to argue that individuals will label unintentional actions as accidents and intentional ones as failures. As discussed earlier, assessments of intent may be shaped by a variety of factors (i.e., relationship history, context, and power). The recipient may examine any number of factors when constructing his or her view of the event in question. Whether or not the action was accidental or not is *not* the question; rather, how the recipient and actor perceive and define the situation is of fundamental importance in how each attempts to frame and reframe the conflict.

Sillars (1980a; 1980b) has examined the relationship between conflict style and attribution. He argues that attribution is a key predictor in an actor's evaluation of and emotional responses to the recipient (Sillars, 1980a). When examining roommates' assessments of interpersonal conflicts, he observed that integrative conflict strategies were more likely when the conflict was attributed to unstable conditions. That is, when the roommate believed that the conflict was accidental, integrative conflict strategies were more likely. However, a follow-up study failed to observe the same relationship. Thus, research on attribution of intent does not provide a clear direction on the likelihood of account use.

Gonzales and others (1990, 1992) have researched the effects of intent on account behavior. Much of their work centers on the interpersonal pressure that

individuals feel when they are at the center of a predicament. Essentially, unintentional predicaments exert only a small amount of social pressure on the actor and recipient. Gonzales et al.'s (1990) observations of accounts following accidents support this claim. They found that more refusals and fewer concessions followed situations cast as accidents, possibly because neither party felt a need to give or receive concessions. However, if the act was judged to be intentional by the recipient, the actor might perceive that his or her actions threatened the recipient. As a result, the actor may be more willing to mitigate the situation. In contrast, the actor might feel pressured by social norms to act correctly and thus may perceive a threat to his or her identity. To protect him or her self from this pressure, the actor might offer fewer concessions and more justifications and refusals. Gonzales et al. (1992), for example, observed "a relative paucity" of concessions following actions seen by the actor as intentional (p. 967). According to these results, then, aggravating accounts are most likely when the action is cast as intentional or accidental. Yet, these results are opposite those found in other studies of accounts following failure events.

Thus, the previous literature offers little cogent direction on the effects of perceived intentionality on account use. Additionally, the previous research examines only the actor's perception of intentionality. What happens if the recipient expresses her or his assessment of intentionality to the actor? Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) suggests that individuals would be more mitigating in conflicts viewed by the recipient as intentional. Yet, the failure event already runs counter to social norms. The actor, who may feel defensive already, may become increasingly defensive if the

recipient believes the action to be intentional. Thus, because of the increased defensiveness, an actor might be more likely to use aggravating accounts to bolster his or her identity even if the recipient views the conflict as accidental.

H 3a: Individuals will be more likely to use mitigating accounts when the recipient labels the conflict as intentional rather than accidental.

H 3b: Individuals will be more likely to use aggravating accounts when the recipient labels the conflict as accidental rather than intentional.

Of course, interaction effects may occur between assessments of intentionality and agency because of their coupling. For example, it is possible to blame a person but add that the situation was accidental. Current research on blaming clusters judgments of intent with judgments of agency. However, this review illustrates that both attributions involve distinct processes. Therefore, a number of tentative hypotheses can be drawn based on the following assumptions. First, actions perceived to be intentional are more threatening to the actor than are actions perceived to be accidental. Second, blaming the actor is more threatening than is blaming oneself or a third party. Yet, blaming a third party for an intentional failure may open the door for an actor to also blame that third party as well.

H 4: Individuals will be more likely to use aggravating accounts if the recipient blames a third party for an intentional action rather than frame it as an accident.

Because the lens used to view the conflict may not be very dependent on attribution of blame, no interactions are expected to occur between frame type, agency, and intentionality.

Accounting for Gender

As Putnam and Poole (1987) indicate, the results of gender effects on conflict styles are mixed. For example, they note that studies suggest that males have a higher likelihood of using forcing strategies while females rely on compromising (e.g., Jamieson & Thomas, 1974). However, they also note several other studies which suggest no consistent relationship between gender and conflict management style. In fact, Henzl and Turner (1987) observe that women are very assertive in managing their respective conflicts. Even though previous literature suggests such assertiveness is a compensatory strategy for perceived power differences, Instone, Major, & Bunker (1983, in Putnam & Poole, 1987) indicate that such a rationale is not likely. In all, gender's effect on conflict styles is mixed.

The accounting literature, meanwhile, also shows some mixed findings on the relationship of gender and account type. For example, Schlenker and Darby (1982) observe no main or interaction effects of sex on account type. However, Gonzales et al. (1990, 1992) report a significant main effect and interaction effect of gender on account types. They note that women are more likely to use mitigating accounts whereas men were more likely to use aggravating accounts. They observe that cultural differences might pressure men to be more concerned with task success whereas women might be pressured to be more concerned with interpersonal concerns. Although the previous

literature has been mixed, a tentative conclusion can be drawn. No studies have shown that men were more likely than women to mitigate or cooperate. That is, women are either as likely as or *more* likely than men to apologize or cooperate with the other person. As a result, it is possible that women will be more likely to use mitigating accounts than will men.

H 5a: Females will be more likely than males to use mitigating accounts.

H 5b: Males will be more likely than females to use aggravating accounts.

No interaction effects between gender and assessments of intentionality should be present. The previous literature purports that conflicts cast as intentional are more likely to be mitigated. If women really do tend to be “disarming and appeasing” (Gonzales et al., 1992), they may be more likely to use mitigating rather than aggravating accounts if the recipient sees the conflict as intentional. If women are blamed for an intentional conflict, they should be more likely than men to mitigate the situation.

The actor’s gender, though, might interact with conflict naming. If women are more focused on the relationship, they may be more likely to use a concession or excuse when the conflict is perceived relationally by the recipient. Men, on the other hand, might be expected to concede or excuse their actions if the conflict is perceived factually by the recipient.

H 6a: Females will be more likely than males to use mitigating accounts if the recipient uses a relational frame.

H 6b: Females will be more likely than males to use aggravating accounts if

the recipient uses a factual frame.

H 6c: Males will be more likely than females to use mitigating accounts if the recipient uses a factual frame.

H 6d: Males will be more likely than females to use aggravating accounts if the recipient uses a relational frame.

Summary

This chapter has discussed conflict framing and its application to account use by actors. Various relationships between the recipient's definition and blaming of the conflict and the actor's use of accounts are proposed. Viewing account use in light of issue development framing indicates that the likelihood of using a specific account will change depending on how the recipient defines the conflict, whether or not the conflict is perceived to be intentionality or accidental, and how the recipient assess blame for the situation.

Chapter III outlines the methodology used to examine the relationships between issue development and account use. The chapter identifies the dependent and independent variables, how each were operationalized, and what statistical methods were used to analyze the data. The chapter also discusses the results of the pilot tests used to ensure that the study functioned properly.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

To test the hypotheses, this study employed vignettes to achieve the desired manipulations of the independent categorical variables of naming, assessed intentionality, and locus of blame. Each of the variables, along with gender, was tested using logit for the relationships to respondents' use of mitigating accounts and aggravating accounts. Each dependent variable was operationalized as a categorical, binary variable. T-tests and ANOVA were also used to examine the relationship between issue development framing and the frequency of each account used.

Organizations

Because the focus of the current research centered on the management of organizational conflict, this study recruited staff members of organizations to complete the survey instruments. Although the present study feasibly could have been conducted using any type of organization, nonprofit organizations were chosen for two primary reasons. First, individuals who work for a nonprofit organization may be committed to its overall mission, particularly if they have expressed satisfaction with their contribution to that mission (Aryee, Luk, & Sone, 1998). As Brown and Yoshioka stated (2003), "The nature of nonprofits places an expectation on employees to work for the cause, not the paycheck" (p.7). Given the budgetary constraints and the lack of fringe benefits offered by these organizations (Emanuele & Higgins, 2000), nonprofit employees often remain at their respective organizations for causes other than financial reasons. Additionally, given the mixed levels of employees, the various resource constraints, and

the large workload each staff worker must carry, conflict over the priorities and functions of the organization and over individual workload seem inevitable. In light of the above points, staff workers should be more likely to actively resolve conflict rather than to walk away from the situation and the organization. As such, nonprofit employees provided a satisfactory participant base from which to conduct the study.

Nonprofit organizations were identified using lists of nonprofit assistance organizations, such as the United Way and other management-assistance organizations (such as the Nonprofit Management Center) throughout the United States. The organizations were based in the southwestern, midwestern, and northeastern United States. A total of 36 organizations took part. These organizations are classified in Table 4 according to their status within the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities (NTEE). Appendix A lists the definitions of each category.

Of the 36 organizations involved in this study, most (10) were health care organizations. The relative size of these organizations was also varied. Thirteen organizations had staff sizes between one and five; 9 between six and ten; 9 between eleven and twenty; 2 between twenty-one and fifty; and 3 organizations larger than 50. In all, organizations involved in the study varied by both type and size.

Participants

All staff personnel within the nonprofit organizations were invited to participate. Volunteers and board members were excluded from completing a survey because of their lack of direct connections to everyday operations and their ability to withdraw from

Table 4 Types of Participating Organizations

NTEE Code	Type of Organization	# of Organizations
A	Arts	1
B	Children's Education	2
E	Health Care	10
F	Mental Health	2
G	Diseases & Disorders	1
I	Crime Prevention	3
K	Agriculture, Food, & Nutrition	1
L	Housing	4
O	Youth Development	1
P	Human Service	7
S	Community Service / Nonprofit Management	3
T	Philanthropy	1

the organization with little consequence. Board members have the option to refrain from engaging in interpersonal conflicts, if they desire. However, staff personnel have both the mission commitment and the financial incentive (though small) to work through a conflict situation.

A total of 226 individuals took part in the study. Average age was 42.6 years old. Females made up most of the respondents ($n = 167$, 73.9%), males comprised 23%

($n = 52$), and 3.1% ($n = 7$) provided no answer. Reports of organizational position included CEO's ($n = 25$, 11.5%), other directors ($n = 52$, 23.9%), supervisors ($n = 4$, 1.8%), and staff ($n = 137$, 62.8%). CEO's included the organizations' executive directors; "other directors" incorporated those who were identified as being directors of specific departments within the organizations without being the heads of the organizations; "supervisors" included those who identified themselves as assistant directors or managers of some branch or division; and "staff" members were identified as those who did not indicate managerial or director positions. Participants held their current position for an average of 2 years and had worked in the nonprofit arena for an average of 5.11 years. The demographic data showed a wide variety of ages, genders, respondent positions, and nonprofit experiences.

Design and Measurements

This study employed a 2 (respondent gender) x 2 (conflict naming) x 2 (intentionality) x 3 (conflict blaming) design. The manipulation in this study held a variety of factors constant, including relational closeness, power over each other and within the organization, liability, level of blame, and accuser gender. Relational closeness and position power were held constant through the conflict scenario. Both parties to the conflict possessed a working relationship with the other, had identical job positions with separate divisions within the organization, and shared blame within the conflict. Liability was controlled to prevent conflict management by lawsuit, which brings a host of other factors to bear, by ensuring that the actions of each were not punishable in the legal system. Finally, the accuser's gender was controlled by creating

an equal number of the scenarios in which a female or a male acts as the accuser. In all, then, twelve different scenarios were utilized.

Based on the proposed integration of issue development framing and conflict accounting, three independent variables were manipulated within the study: intentionality, conflict blaming, and conflict naming. Intentionality was operationalized as intentional or accidental. If the conflict was named intentional, the action was expressed as occurring on purpose or with the disputant's awareness. If the conflict was named as accidental, the action was cast as occurring without purpose or intention. Conflict blaming was operationalized with three levels: blaming the other, blaming the self, and blaming a third party. Blaming the other occurred when the research participant was blamed completely. Blaming the self occurred when the accuser (i.e., not the participant) placed the blame on himself or herself. Blaming the third party involved completely blaming the organization's board for initiating the conflict.

Frame type (conflict naming) was operationalized based on two of the four frames identified by Drake and Donohue (1996): factual and relational. They defined factual frames as "appraisals of reality...that highlight current, objective, unbiased factors of a topic" (p. 303). Factual frames, then, focus on conflict substance or what the conflict was about. Specifically, individuals using factual frames discuss in the conflict in terms of measurable, objective factors of a conflict. For example, in a work conflict, a party might note that he/she worked three weekends in a row or put in 10 hours of overtime in the past two weeks. The number of weekends worked or overtime hours relate to factual or documental problems. Relational frames, on the other hand, "center

around the emotional tie between disputants” (p. 304). Because relational frames were focused on emotional characteristics of the relationship, they were operationalized as frames which communicated relationship quality and emotional connection. In the above example, a party would use a relational frame by pointing to the stress he was feeling or the lack of support she felt from the other person. Both of these statements depend on each party’s perception. In all, one frame type focused on objective factors of the conflict whereas the other frame type focused on emotional and relational ties between the disputants. A fourth independent variable consisted of the respondent’s gender. Respondent’s gender was operationalized as male or female, as specific on the survey form. Except for the respondent’s gender, each of these variables was manipulated in the research vignette to create a total of twelve different research groups to which a respondent could belong.

Research and Procedures

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of twenty-four categories. These categories were later collapsed into twelve categories on the basis of naming, intentionality, and blaming because no significant differences emerged with regard to the accuser’s gender. After completing a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix B), respondents were instructed that they were either Steve or Alice and that they were directors in a local food distribution nonprofit organization. They were given identical background information for the conflict between Steve and Alice. The instructions in the packet directed them to read a letter (the vignette) that was written by the other person to them. Participants were then asked to compose a letter responding to their

particular scenario. After writing the response letter, participants were then instructed to complete an 8-item questionnaire assessing the overall manipulation effects of the variables. Once the participant had completed his/her packet, the person handed it to the researcher. Participants were debriefed about the goals of the research project and the vignettes.

Vignette

A vignette, which Alexander and Becker (1978) define as “a short description of a person or a social situation which contains precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgment-making processes of the respondents” was used to manipulate the independent variables. Such a design has a number of benefits (Alexander & Becker, 2001). First, impression-management bias is less likely to be a factor with vignette-based research than if the study was conducted based on interviews. Specifically, mitigating accounts have been perceived as an other-conscious response, and thus more socially acceptable (Gonzales et al., 1990). Therefore, it is self-defeating to ask an individual whether or not he or she would apologize or grant forgiveness for an offense. Second, subtle manipulation of data without respondents’ notice is much more easily accomplished through the use of vignettes (Alexander & Becker). Such subtlety keeps bias in check and enables researchers to measure slight variations of the independent variables. In all, vignettes provide a useful way for measuring the relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Each of the scenarios had word counts of between 202 and 218. Mean word length was 210.92, with seven scenarios containing more than 210 words and 5 containing 210 or fewer. Each vignette was 16 lines long. Directions and background (shown in Appendix C) given to each participant were common across all scenarios. Word length for the vignette background was 432.

The type of failure event in the vignette was based on Volkema and Bergmann's (1989) research into types of organizational conflict. Their research identified "doesn't carry workload" as the most dominant form of instigation (17.1%), ahead of personality (15.9%), different work ethics (12.2%), and downgrading a coworker (9.8%). As such, the scenario involved two co-workers in a nonprofit who perceive the other as not carrying his or her own workload.

A complete list of the vignettes used in this study is found in Appendix D. The following basic vignette was used to add different manipulations.

Dear Steve,

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I feel that you are not putting in as much work as you had done in the past. Instead, you have been intentionally passing more of your responsibilities off to me. Here is what I am seeing. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged and I have been getting more tasks from you.

These are what I am seeing. Your actions have changed how we do our jobs. I know that you are aware of these problems and are intentionally redefining your job at my expense.

I anticipate your reply.

Each vignette was introduced with an identical greeting, first paragraph, and last sentence. Factual framing (as illustrated in the above vignette) was generated through the discussion of the amount of work each party does, the amount of money earned, and the amount of effort expended. Each of elements could be objectively measurable through hours worked, numbers of letters written, planning responsibility, and number of tasks completed. Each of these fit with Drake and Donohue's (1996) definition of factual frame type as that which relied on current, objective, and unbiased factors of a situation.

Relational framing (underlined in the following example) was achieved by altering the second, third, and fourth paragraphs.

I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize I was accidentally creating the problem by not understanding why our relationship changed. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. I realize I was the one accidentally hurting our relationship with my actions. So I accept responsibility and fault for unintentionally causing the strain and competition of our relationship.

The second paragraph created the initial focus on relationship. As opposed to the factual frame type which communicated perceptions of work accomplished and money earned, the relational frame expressed concern over interpersonal issues. Additionally, the focus of the vignette was on "strain" and "a positive work environment" – factors which were

difficult to measure objectively. In all, frame type was manipulated on the basis of Drake and Donohue's (1996) description of factual and relational frames by altering whether objective, measurable issues or emotional, relationship-focused issues were described

Intentionality was directly stated and manipulated in each vignette. For example, the following excerpt from one vignette demonstrates a scenario in which the conflict was intentionally initiated (as noted by underlining).

I feel that you are not putting in as much work as you had done in the past. Instead, you have been intentionally passing more of your responsibilities off to me. Here is what I am seeing. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged and I have been getting more tasks from you.

These are what I am seeing. Your actions have changed how we do our jobs. I know that you are aware of these problems and are intentionally redefining your job at my expense.

Both underlined sentences explicitly indicated a perception of the conflict as intentionally developed. Conversely, the excerpt below illustrated a conflict that was cast as accidental.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize I was accidentally creating the problem by not understanding why our relationship changed. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. I realize I was the one accidentally hurting our relationship with my actions. So I accept responsibility and fault for unintentionally causing the strain and competition of our relationship.

Again, the vignette explicitly stated that the conflict was "accidentally [created]" and that the letter writer was to blame for "accidentally hurting our relationship" and "unintentionally causing the strain and competition of our relationship." Intentionality,

then, was manipulated by explicitly stating within the vignette whether the conflict was intentionally or accidentally enacted.

Similar to the previous factors mentioned, conflict blaming was manipulated by explicitly stating who was seen as the cause for the conflict. The following vignette specifies the scenario in which the “other” party (i.e., the research participant) was blamed (as noted by underlining).

I feel that you are not putting in as much work as you had done in the past. Instead, you have been intentionally passing more of your responsibilities off to me. Here is what I am seeing. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged and I have been getting more tasks from you.

These are what I am seeing. Your actions have changed how we do our jobs. I know that you are aware of these problems and are intentionally redefining your job at my expense.

The vignette directly cast the participant as the one who caused the current conflict. In all but three sentences in the above vignette, the letter placed the responsibility for the troubles completely on the other.

This type of blame was contrasted with how the writer of the vignette (i.e., the confronter) blamed himself/herself.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize I was accidentally creating the problem by not understanding why our relationship changed. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. I realize I was the one accidentally hurting our relationship with my actions. So I accept responsibility and fault for unintentionally causing the strain and competition of our relationship.

In this scenario, the vignette writer explained his/her perceptions of what he/she saw occurring, and that he/she originally thought that the other person was to blame.

However, the writer ultimately accepted blame through confessions in the four underlined sentences above. Although the vignette still contained elements of blaming the other party for straining the relationship, in the next condition, the vignette-writer explicitly blamed himself/herself for the situation. Including the sections which potentially blamed onto the other party maintained uniformity of the vignettes.

Finally, blaming a third party was manipulated by directly blaming the board of the nonprofit organization, as the following excerpt illustrates.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I do not blame you for this. Instead, I realize the board has created the stress by changing how we work. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged, and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. However, I realize the board's intentional changes – not yours – changed our responsibilities. Our new system seems mostly to blame for these changes.

Like the scenario in which the vignette-writer blamed himself, this scenario explicitly blamed the board and the system that they created for the conflict.

In all, conflict framing, intentionality, and blaming were manipulated primarily in the last two paragraphs of the vignettes. In fact, many of the sentences were used to manipulate more than one of the factors. Vignettes were pilot tested in order to ensure that the manipulations worked.

Pilot Testing

Six pilot tests were conducted to determine the success of the manipulations of each variable and to assess usage of each account type. Each pilot test was intended to test the reliability and realism of the manipulations. Six tests were conducted in order to ensure the scenario's realism and coherency as well as to correct ineffective

manipulations of the independent variables. Whereas tests one and two undertaken to ensure the realism of the study, tests three through six were conducted to resolve complications with the various manipulations. The tests involved samples of either nonprofit employees or undergraduate students. The tests used the scale in Appendix E to check the effectiveness of the desired manipulations. The scale asked respondents for their perceptions of naming, intentionality, and blaming in the vignette. Manipulations of the conflict naming, intentionality, and conflict blaming variables were assessed with an 8-item questionnaire (see Appendix E) completed by each respondent at the end of the survey. Each item was rated on a 5-point, Likert-type scale from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *to a great extent*. Three items measured perceptions of blame, two measured perceptions of intentionality, two measured perceptions of frame type, and the final measured gender stereotype. The final item was dropped because of a lack of significant relationship to any of the above independent variables.

The goal of the initial pilot test was to receive feedback from respondents regarding different aspects of the vignette and to examine responses to the initial scenario. Twenty-two undergraduate participants were asked to write a response letter to a vignette and to answer open-ended questions about the case, clarity of directions, clarity of the background, and identification with the respondents. The feedback from the first round of pilot testing revealed several areas that needed improvement: changing names to be more gender-specific (from Chris and Morgan to Steve and Alice); clarifying the situation (clarifying job roles and responsibilities); equalizing blame for the conflict; and clarifying directions. Even though the analysis of account styles

indicated no significant relationship among the independent variables, the researcher observed a negative correlation between mitigating and aggravating accounts ($r = -.477$, $p < .05$). This negative correlation suggested that the conceptualization of mitigating and aggravating accounts as opposites surfaced in the study. That is, the respondent would probably not apologize while stating that he/she was not to blame. Based on the results of this pilot study, a follow up pilot study with twenty-three undergraduate students was conducted to test variable manipulations.

An independent sample t-test was used to assess perceived differences in conflict naming and intentionality. Results of the t-test for factual frame type indicated no significant differences between factual ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .888$) and relational framing ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.055$), $t(22) = 1.465$, $p = .157$. However, a significant difference was observed in the relational frame condition, $t(22) = -3.37$, $p < .01$. Respondents perceived the vignettes in this condition as focusing more on relational ties ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .71$) than on objective facts ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .985$). The results indicated that the factually-framed vignettes did not sufficiently differentiate objective and subjective issues for each condition. Rather, the conflict was seen as both emotional and factual. However, in the relational-frame condition, respondents discerned an absence of objective facts, as evident in the higher observed means for relational ties.

The results of the t-test for intentionality in both conditions were both non-significant. Respondents reported no significant differences between intentional ($M = 3$, $SD = 1.41$) and accidental ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1$), $t(13) = 1.075$, $p = .302$ for the intentional naming. Likewise, they reported no significant differences between

accidental ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.2$) and intentional ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .8165$) for the accidental naming. The results indicated that the manipulations of intentionality were ineffective and that the vignettes did not differentiate explicitly enough between intentional and unintentional scenarios.

A 1x3 ANOVA was run to assess respondent's perceptions of blame in each vignette. The only significant difference was in the blame self condition ($F(2, 12) = 6.343$, $p < .05$, $r^2 = .102$). However, a test of Fisher's least significant difference (LSD) post hoc analysis revealed that the primary significant difference was between the blame other and blame self condition rather than between the blame self and the other two conditions. Results for blaming the third party were $F(2, 12) = 1.711$, $p = .212$, and results for blaming the other were $F(2, 12) = .293$, $p = .751$. As with the previous manipulations, the scenarios did not explicitly state who was being blamed. In all, this second pilot study indicated a need to recast the independent variables within the vignette by making them more explicit.

A third pilot study was conducted with five staff members of a local nonprofit organization in a focus-group setting. Respondents were given the full packet of materials and asked to complete them. Respondents were then asked for their feedback regarding what parts of the scenario were clear and what needed improvement. They indicated that the job titles were appropriate and that the conflict was familiar and realistic. They also indicated that they were able to differentiate between their roles and the accusers' roles because of the gendered names, which was a concern with the first pilot study. However, they said they needed more background on the characters' roles

and jobs within the organization and clearer directions on what to do as they proceeded through the packet of materials. Because members of a nonprofit organization reported that the conflict scenario was realistic and familiar, the basic scenario was not changed. Rather, the main task after this pilot study was to expand on the relational history and role responsibilities of each character in the scenario, as well as to clarify the directions.

A fourth pilot study with twenty-five undergraduates was conducted to test the manipulations. Each respondent was given the background situation, a vignette, and a manipulation check questionnaire, and asked to report their perceptions of the scenario. Independent t-tests were used to test for differences in the conflict naming and framing factors. A 1x3 ANOVA was used to test for differences in blaming. Similar to the second pilot study no significant differences were observed in the intentionality variable (Intentional: $t(22) = 2.926, p = .399$; Accidental: $t(22) = .89, p = .583$). Also, similar to the previous pilot study, a significant difference ($t(22) = 1.214, p < .01$) was observed in which relational ties ($M = 3.83, SD = .72$) were perceived as more significant than were objective facts ($M = 2.67, SD = .98$). No significant differences were observed under the factual frame condition ($t(22) = .506, p = .157$). Results indicated that changes in manipulations made in each vignette were insufficient to achieve the desired effect.

However, for the blame factor, significant differences were observed in all three conditions. For the blame self condition ($F(2,21) = 4.681, p < .05, r^2 = .05$), an LSD post hoc test revealed significant differences between blame self and blame other (1.375, $p < .05$), and between blame self and blame third party (1.25, $p < .05$). For the blame third party (the board) condition ($F(2,21) = 13.936, p < .01, r^2 = .1$), an LSD post hoc test

revealed significant differences between blame board and blame other ($2.125, p < .01$), and blame board and blame self ($1.25, p < .05$). Finally, for the blame other condition ($F(2, 21) = 4.109, p < .05, r^2 = .02$), an LSD post hoc test was also used to determine significant differences. This test revealed significant differences between blame other and blame self ($1.125, p < .05$), and between blame other and blame board ($1.125, p < .05$). The results from this pilot study indicated that manipulations of the blame variable achieved the desired effect; however, manipulations of conflict naming and intentionality still needed attention.

A fifth pilot study was conducted to test the changes made to the manipulations of conflict naming and intentionality. Fifty undergraduates read through the scenarios and responded to questions using the manipulation check scale. An independent sample t-test was again used to determine if respondents perceived significant differences between levels of intentionality. Unlike the previous pilot tests, significant differences were observed in both the intentional ($t(49) = 3.181, p < .01$) and accidental conditions ($t(49) = -2.637, p < .05$). Under the intentional condition, respondents perceived that the conflict was framed as intentional ($M = 2.92, SD = 1.06$) rather than accidental ($M = 2.07, SD = .83$). The opposite was true in the accidental conditions, with respondents perceiving the conflict to be more accidental ($M = 3.814, SD = .83$) than intentional ($M = 3.083, SD = 1.14$).

For naming, a pattern similar to previous pilot studies emerged. A significant difference emerged ($t(48) = -3.531, p < .01$) in the relational frame but not in the factual frame condition ($t(49) = .753, p = .455$). In the relational condition, respondents

reported a higher degree of focus on relationship ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .74$) than on objective factors ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .87$). In the factual condition, respondents reported similar levels of attention paid to both objective ($M = 4$, $SD = .62$) and relationship factors ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .93$).

Similar to the previous pilot study, manipulations for conflict blaming also achieved the desired results. Under the blame self condition, a significant difference emerged ($F(2, 48) = 20.06$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .12$). LSD post hoc tests revealed significant differences between blame self and blame other (2.39, $p < .01$) and between blame self and blame board (2.21, $p < .01$). Under the blame board (third party) condition, a similar significant difference was also observed ($F(2, 48) = 31.594$, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .1$). LSD post hoc tests showed a significant difference in perceptions of levels of blame between the blame board and blame other condition (2.167, $p < .001$), and the blame board and blame self condition (2.637, $p < .001$). Finally, a significant difference was observed in the blame other condition ($F(2, 48) = 18.695$, $p < .001$, $r^2 = .11$). LSD post hoc tests showed a significant difference in perceptions of levels of blame between the other and the self (1.78, $p < .001$), and between the other and the third party (1.91, $p < .001$). In all, the manipulations for both blaming and intentionality seemed successful. However, conflict naming was still a concern.

A final pilot study was conducted to examine the manipulations of frame type. Nine undergraduates were given two scenarios in a focus group and asked to report their observations qualitatively. They were questioned regarding the realism, ease of directions, frame type, conflict naming, and conflict blaming. They responded that the

letter and scenario appeared realistic, and that the directions were adequate to complete the research materials. They also reported that they were able to discern differences in their vignettes between who was blamed and whether it was cast as intentional or unintentional. Frame type was again a concern, but not as great as in previous studies. For the most part, the respondents were able to discern based on the questions from the manipulation check items what constituted a factual frame and what constituted a relational frame. Their responses indicated that the manipulations of relational frame were functioning, and that the factual framing was discernable. Adding the sentence, “These are the facts” for the factual frame type appeared to signal that the vignette was more focused on factual than relational frames. However, given the inherent emotionality of conflicts in general (Jones, 2001), some level of perceptions of relational and emotional framing should be expected in any scenario.

The pilot studies indicated that systematic changes to the vignettes were adequate to achieve the desired manipulations. Through six pilot studies, significant differences were observed in perceptions of conflict blaming and intentionality (see Table 5). The first pilot tests resolved confusions regarding the individuals in the scenario as well as the conflict at hand. The second pilot test indicated that the situation had sufficient realism. Pilot tests three through six built upon each other to indicate that the desired manipulations of naming, intent, and blaming would be found when the study was conducted. Although conflict naming was still somewhat tenuous, the decision was made to proceed with the study based on the responses from the last pilot test.

Table 5 Synthesis of Pilot Test Results

Pilot Test	Naming		Intent			Blaming	
	Factual	Relational	Intentional	Accidental	Other	Self	Board
1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	NS	$t(22) = -3.37, p < .01$	NS	NS	NS	$F(2, 12) = 6.343, p < .05, r^2 = .102$	NS
3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	NS	$t(22) = -1.214, p < .01$	NS	NS	$F(2, 21) = 4.109, p < .05, r^2 = .02$	$F(2, 21) = 4.681, p < .05, r^2 = .05$	$F(2, 21) = 13.936, p < .01, r^2 = .1$
5	NS	$t(48) = -3.531, p < .01$	$t(49) = 3.181, p < .01$	$t(49) = -2.637, p < .05$	$F(2, 48) = 18.695, p < .001, r^2 = .11$	$F(2, 48) = 20.06, p < .001, r^2 = .12$	$F(2, 48) = 31.594, p < .01, r^2 = .1$
6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Notes: Pilots 1 and 3 were designed to test realism and appropriateness of vignettes and measurements. Pilot 6 was a qualitative examination, yielding no statistical data.

Data Collection

Organizations were recruited through the use of local nonprofit assistance organizations and through a local nonprofit organization's listing of area nonprofits. Each organization received an email that described the study in general terms and gave contact information for responding, if they were interested in participating. Organizations self-selected based on their interest in the study. Based on their physical proximity to the researcher, the studies were either conducted in person or by mail.

When the research was conducted in person (that is, when a researcher was present to conduct the study), participants were first informed that the purpose of the research was to examine how people in organizations handle potentially difficult situations with their coworkers. Respondents were reminded that their answers would be completely anonymous and that they should be open and honest in their responses. After signing the release form, the research packets were distributed to the participants. They were instructed to refrain from talking during the study, as this might affect the usability of their results. Respondents were given as much time as they needed to complete their research materials.

When the research was conducted by mail, each organization was given the identical research script that was used by the researcher when the study was conducted in person. Each contact person for the organization (usually the executive director) was told what she/he would receive from the researcher and what was needed to complete the surveys. Each organization received the requested number of packets and consent forms, along with a pre-stamped and addressed return envelope. The contact person was

instructed to read the research script aloud and to make an oral request to his/her staff to refrain from speaking while they and others were completing the research materials. Organizations which participated by mail requested varying numbers of packets, from 1 to 55. Rate of return per organization totaled to approximately 60%. However, rate of return per packet mailed totaled much lower, to approximately 30%. Executive directors were not informed as to the nature of the study when they were recruited.

Response Letter – Coding open-ended data

Schonbach's (1980, 1990) account taxonomy, based on that of Scott and Lyman (1968), was used to analyze participants' responses to the vignettes. His taxonomy separated accounts into four categories: concession, excuse, justification, and refusal. Gonzales and colleagues (1990, 1992) also utilized Schonbach's taxonomy in their studies of account types following various transgressions. The complete taxonomy is included in Appendix F.

Because the mutual exclusivity of each account category was questionable (see Schonbach, 1990), a separate operational definition based on conflict naming and conflict blaming was created for each account type, as shown in Table 6. Concessions were operationalized as statements which cast the failure event as a true failure (a responsibility omitted or an untoward act committed) and the accounter as completely to blame. That is, those statements which stated or implied that the event was a failure and that the respondent was completely to blame were coded as concessions. Concessions included requests for forgiveness, admission of guilt, and expressed hope for a better relationship. Excuses were operationalized as accounts which cast the failure as a

negative event, but which accepted only partial blame. Excuses included confession of partial responsibility, denial of intent to harm, and identification of external causes.

Justifications were operationalized as accounts that accepted blame or responsibility for an event and named the event as good or not as bad as originally thought. Justifications included arguments for good intentions (rather than no intentions), minimization of harm, and arguments that the actions in question were moderated or restrained. Finally, refusals were operationalized as accounts which accepted no blame and/or stated that the event never occurred. Refusals included denying that the event took place and denying any responsibility. The following table illustrates the differences among the four account types.

Table 6 Account Operationalization

	Concessions	Excuses	Justifications	Refusals
Responsible?	Completely	Partially	Yes	No
Problem?	Definitely	Yes	No	No
Miscellaneous	Expression of regret	Points outside him/herself	Often comparative to other actions or other people	Can't be reproached

The present research followed the lead of McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) and Gonzales et al. (1990, 1992) in collapsing these four account types into two categories: mitigating (concessions and excuses) and aggravating (justifications and refusals). Mitigating accounts acknowledged the victim's interpretation of the events (in whole or in part) as well as the victim's correctness in approaching the accouter.

Aggravating accounts questioned the victim's interpretation as well as the right of the victim to reproach the supposed transgressor (Gonzales et al., 1990). Thus, it appeared legitimate, in light of past research, to consolidate Schonbach's four categories into two categories of mitigating and aggravating.

These dependent variables – mitigating accounts and aggravating accounts – were operationalized as dichotomous (1 = use of account, 2 = non-use of account), categorical variables to code the use (or non-use) of each general account type. The unit of analysis was the sentence. If either a concession or an excuse was used at least once in the participant's response letter, respondents were coded as having used a mitigating account. If a justification or a refusal was used in the participant's letter, they were coded as having used an aggravating account. To ascertain the numbers of mitigating and aggravating accounts per each respondent's letter, each sentence was coded into one of five categories: concession, excuse, justification, refusal, and noncodable. Each category was also collapsed and summed to arrive at the total numbers of account types used.

Coders were three undergraduate students who had expressed their interest in this study after participating in a pilot study. They were not informed as to the specific goals and hypotheses of the research. Rather, they were given a general overview of the research and how the data were to be collected so that they had an idea of the items they were coding. Coders were compensated for their time spent in training sessions, completing agreement exercises, and coding responses. Two coders analyzed written

responses to the vignettes and one analyzed and input data from the manipulation checks and demographic questionnaire.

Coders were trained using responses from pilot studies and from the sample exemplars. They were given code books delineating and describing Schonbach's taxonomy. The code books gave examples of each type of account, along with operational definitions. They were also given a code book detailing how to distinguish between a codable and a noncodable account. They were instructed that they were to examine each sentence as the unit of analysis. If multiple account types could be discerned in a single sentence, they were instructed to use the last account type noted in the sentence. For example, if a respondent said, "I'm sorry you think that way, but it's really not my fault at all," the sentence could be coded as both a concession and a refusal. Obviously, each account differs greatly in its mitigating or aggravating quality. Because the intent of this statement could be legitimately interpreted as the accounteer refusing to accept blame, the final account stands as the appropriate type for the code.

Training involved discussing each account type, coding sample responses, and discussing why coders categorized statements as they did. Their responses were compared with each other and with the researcher. Initial coder agreement was measured using Cohen's Kappa. Although Kappa levels were above the acceptable percent of .7 between the respective coders and the researcher, the agreement level was below .5 between the coders. Additional training was conducted on differences between excuses and justifications. After this training, coders achieved an agreement level of $k = .81$. Coders were then given their first responses from the study to code.

Kappa levels were measured weekly (after every 40 responses). These levels ranged from .7 to .85 during the three weeks of coding. Coders were instructed to categorize only those responses of which they were certain. If a coder was unsure of the intent of a statement or how to code a particular response, she was instructed to refrain from coding until she consulted the other coder and the researcher. Thus, uncertainties were resolved by discussion and agreement among the coders and the researcher.

Method of Analysis

Loglinear analysis with logit was used to measure the predictive value of the independent variables on the dependent variables of mitigating and aggravating accounts. DeMaris (1992) argues, “Logit analysis provides an interpretable linear model for categorical response, and thus offers a number of advantages over previous techniques” (p. 1). Logit is similar to loglinear analysis and standard regression in that it allows researchers to examine the predictive power (as measured through the concentration coefficient and entropy) of various independent variables. However, the main difference between logit analysis and standard loglinear analysis is the ability to define one variable as a dependent variable using logit. Logit reveals the odds of an event occurring or not occurring during a specific situation, as well as the odds of an event occurring in different situations (DeMaris, 1992). As a result, the hypotheses, which are concerned with the effects of independent variables and their interactions on the likelihood of using mitigating or aggravating responses, were measured with logit analysis.

Account frequencies (number of mitigating accounts used and number of aggravating accounts used) were measured using a different set of tests. Independent sample t-tests were used to examine differences in account levels with respect to conflict naming, intentionality, and respondent gender. A 1X3 factorial ANOVA was used to study the differences caused by blaming and by the interaction of the four independent variables. Significance levels for all tests were set at $p < .05$. To account for the increased risk of Type II error due to multiple tests of significance, the Bonferroni correction was used, lowering the alpha level to $p < .01$.

Summary

This chapter presented information about participant selection, research design and measurement, pilot data, and method of analysis. Respondents were asked to envision what they would do in a conflict scenario within a nonprofit organization. Six pilot tests were conducted to ensure the satisfactory manipulation of the independent variables before the actual data collection began. Coders were trained to categorize each sentence in the respondents' letter into account types. Logit analysis, independent sample t-tests, and a 1X3 factorial ANOVA were utilized to assess the relationship of the independent variables to the use of mitigating and aggravating accounts. The findings of these analyses are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

As discussed in the previous chapter, manipulations of the conflict naming, intentionality, and conflict blaming variables were assessed with an 8-item questionnaire (see Appendix E) completed by each respondent at the end of the survey. Manipulation of conflict naming was measured using an independent-samples t-test. Results confirmed that the manipulations of conflict naming were successful in both the factual frame condition and the relational frame condition. In the factual frame condition, respondents perceived more factual framing ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.027$) than relational framing ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.122$), $t(207) = 4.908$, $p < .01$. Similarly, for the relational frame condition, respondents perceived the vignette to be more focused on relational issues ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .965$) than on objective factors ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.126$), $t(209) = -7.306$, $p < .01$. Although it may be argued that the desired results, particularly for the factual framing condition, were average, the more important point is that respondents perceived *more* of the intended frame than the other. It must be noted that the manipulations of one dimension might affect perceptions of the other dimensions. Because these results suggest a difference in framing in these respective conditions, the figures indicated that the manipulations were successful.

Manipulations of intentionality also were measured using independent-sample t-tests. Similar to the manipulations of frame type, results indicated that the manipulations were successful. In the intentional condition, respondents perceived that the vignette

cast the conflict as more intentional ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.316$) than accidental ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.202$), $t(209) = 2.977$, $p < .01$. In the unintentional condition, respondents reported that the vignette named the conflict as more accidental ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.045$) than intentional ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.178$), $t(209) = -4.674$, $p < .01$. Again, as discussed above, the lower values in the intentional condition included the condition in which the accuser blamed him or herself rather than the respondent. This operational difference may have confounded assessment of attribution, leading to a lower score on this item. Yet, a significant difference between the two conditions indicated that these manipulations were successful.

Finally, the manipulation of conflict blaming was measured using a 1X3 ANOVA. Results for the blame other condition (in which the respondent was blamed) indicated a significant difference, $F(2, 209) = 65.562$, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .386$. An LSD post hoc test revealed significant differences between the blame other ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .944$) and blame self conditions ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.064$), as well as between the blame other and blame board conditions ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .964$). The results indicate that respondents observed a significant difference in levels of blaming the accuser, the respondent, or the board. Likewise, results for the blame self condition (in which the actor blamed himself/herself) indicated a significant difference, $F(2, 209) = 119.646$, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .534$. An LSD post hoc test indicated significant differences between the blame self ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .934$) and the blame other ($M = 1.42$, $SD = .74$) conditions, and between the blame self and the blame board conditions ($M = 1.65$, $SD = .936$). Finally, results for the blame board condition also indicated significant differences in perceptions of assigned

blame, $F(2, 207) = 209.693$, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .67$. An LSD post hoc test showed significant differences between the blame board ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .962$) and blame other ($M = 1.36$, $SD = .635$) conditions, the blame board and blame self ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .947$) conditions, and between the blame other and blame self conditions. The results from all three blame conditions indicate that manipulations of blame were successful.

In all, then, manipulations for conflict naming, intentionality, and conflict blaming seemed successful. Even though the reported results were not as great as desired, the significant differences observed in each condition were appropriate and acceptable. The next section presents participants' responses to these manipulations.

Independent Variables

Naming, intentionality, and blaming were analyzed for main and interaction effects in the use of both mitigating and aggravating statements. Interaction effects refer to the specific combination of some or all of the independent variables. To determine which main and interaction effects were significant for each account type, both hierarchical loglinear analysis and partial chi-square values were employed. As Fienberg (1980) recommends, the margins were constrained and the values for the dependent variables were fixed. For the use of mitigating statements, a model containing one four-way dependency and two three-way dependencies were produced, {BNGM, BING, BIGM, INM}. The final model had a likelihood ratio $X^2 = 2.81919.202$, $p = .728$, indicating a good fit to the data. For the use of aggravating statements, a similar model was produced, with one four-way dependency and one three-way dependency, {IGNA, IGNB, BIGA}. The likelihood ratio for this model suggested

a good fit to the data, $X^2 = 2.165$, $p = .976$. Each of these models were also compared to partial chi-square values for each interaction effect to determine which ones to include in the logit analysis.

Tables 7 and 8 show the partial chi square values for each dependency. For both the use of mitigating and aggravating statements, no significant main dependencies were found. However, for respondents' use of mitigating statements, three significant dependencies were observed: a three-way dependency of blaming, naming, and gender ($p < .05$); a two-way dependency of naming and intentionality ($p < .05$); and a two-way dependency of blaming and gender ($p < .01$). The likelihood chi-square value indicated a reasonably good fit between the model and the data, $X^2 = .732$, with 16.8% of the variance explained by the dependencies, $e = .168$. For respondents' use of aggravating statements, three significant dependencies surfaced: a three-way dependency among blaming, intentionality, and gender ($p < .05$); a three-way dependency among naming, intentionality, and gender ($p < .05$); and a two-way dependency between naming and gender ($p < .01$). The likelihood chi-square also indicated a good fit with the data, $X^2 = .986$, $e = .127$. Thus, both the model selection as well as the partial-chi square analyses indicated a good fit for the use of mitigation and aggravation.

Table 7 Partial χ^2 Values for Use of Mitigating Accounts

Effect	DF	χ^2	Prob.
UseMit x Blame x Intent x Name	2	2.728	.2556
UseMit x Blame x Intent x Gender	2	2.15	.3413
UseMit x Blame x Name x Gender	2	6.006	.0496*
UseMit x Intent x Name x Gender	1	.000	1.00
UseMit x Blame x Intent	2	.568	.7526
UseMit x Blame x Name	2	.812	.6663
UseMit x Intent x Name	1	4.668	.0307*
UseMit x Blame x Gender	2	9.329	.0094**
UseMit x Intent x Gender	1	1.038	.3083
UseMit x Name x Gender	1	.179	.672
UseMit x Blame	2	1.906	.3856
UseMit x Intent	1	1.275	.2589
UseMit x Name	1	.897	.3437
UseMit x Gender	1	.286	.593
UseMit	1	24.731	.000***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 8 Partial χ^2 Values for Use of Aggravating Accounts

Effect	DF	χ^2	Prob.
UseAgg x Blame x Intent x Name	2	.481	.7864
UseAgg x Blame x Intent x Gender	2	7.824	.0198*
UseAgg x Blame x Name x Gender	2	.596	.7422
UseAgg x Intent x Name x Gender	1	4.926	.0265*
UseAgg x Blame x Intent	2	1.759	.4151
UseAgg x Blame x Name	2	.045	.9779
UseAgg x Intent x Name	1	3.262	.0709
UseAgg x Blame x Gender	2	.483	.7855
UseAgg x Intent x Gender	1	.063	.8016
UseAgg x Name x Gender	1	9.534	.002**
UseAgg x Blame	2	2.995	.2237
UseAgg x Intent	1	.053	.8182
UseAgg x Name	1	.776	.3784
UseAgg x Gender	1	1.982	.1592
UseAgg	1	1.287	.2565
* $p < .05$			
** $p < .01$			

Thus, respondents' use of mitigating accounts was related to the following dependencies: blaming, naming, and gender; blaming, intentionality, and gender; blaming and gender; and naming and intentionality. Even though the blaming-gender dependency was not explicitly listed in the final model of the stepwise analysis, it is implicitly included as a lower-order effect in the blaming-naming-gender interaction. Respondents' use of aggravating accounts was related to the following dependencies: naming, intentionality, and gender; blaming, intentionality, and gender; and naming and gender. As with mitigation use, the naming-gender dependency was included in the higher-order interaction. Meanwhile, the blaming-intentionality-gender dependency, which includes the lower-order blaming-intentionality dependency, was significant as revealed by the partial chi-squares analysis. Moreover, account use varied by different sets of dependencies, though naming, intentionality, blaming, and gender had significant dependencies for each account type. This finding indicated that each combination of variables played a significant role in how people responded to confrontation, as suggested by issue development framing.

The next step in the analysis involved ascertaining the parameter values of each main effect and dependency. Though main effects were not found to be significant in the above analysis, they were used to determine the total logit values for interaction effects. For example, when determining the total logit value for naming-intentionality in the use of aggravating statements, parameter values for aggravation, naming, intentionality, and the naming-intentionality interaction were totaled. Because logit analysis displayed the *likelihood* of an event happening or not, the parameter values

were used to determine the odds of a participant employing the use of mitigating or aggravating accounts. Tables 9 and 10 indicate the estimated parameters for each account. Positive values revealed an increased likelihood to use a mitigating or an aggravating account, whereas negative values indicated a decreased likelihood to do so. The larger coefficients demonstrated a salient effect on whether or not a particular account type would be used. Note, for instance, that the estimated parameter for use of mitigating accounts is .324, whereas the estimated parameter for use of aggravating accounts is -.152. These values indicate that respondents were much more likely to use an apology or excuse rather than a justification or refusal, as seen in Table 11. These values also suggested that respondents were much more likely to use a mitigating account than not to use one. That is, respondents were more likely to use a concession or an excuse than to refrain from using one. In other words, respondents were more reluctant to use an account which might aggravate the situation but were more likely to use an account which might mitigate the situation.

To understand the likelihood of using a mitigating or an aggravating response for significant effects, the researcher summed relevant parameters to obtain the estimated natural log of using one or both of the account types. The inverse of this natural log was respondent using a mitigating or aggravating account versus refraining from doing so. Values under 1 signified that the odds of a respondent using a certain account in that situation were less than 1:1. That is, respondents were less likely to use a particular account in that situation than to not use one. Conversely, values over 1 indicated that a respondent was more likely than not to use a particular account in that situation. For

Table 9 Parameter Estimates for Use of Mitigating Accounts

Parameter	<i>A</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>SE</i>
UseMit	.324	2.96	.109
Blame	-.007	-.045	.156
	.247	1.61	.153
Name	.061	.559	.109
Intent	.13	1.19	.109
Gender	-.127	-1.16	.109
Blame x Name	.025	.158	.156
	.038	.251	.153
Blame x Intent	-.034	-.219	.156
	-.012	-.09	.153
Blame x Gender	-.263	-1.68	.156
	.431	2.81	.153
Name x Intent	.118	1.08	.109
Name x Gender	-.037	-.334	.109
Intent x Gender	.057	.531	.109
Blame x Name x Intent	.208	1.33	.156
	-.165	-1.08	1.53
Blame x Name x Gender	-.25	-1.6	.156
	.212	1.38	.153

Table 9 Continued

Parameter	<i>A</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>SE</i>
Blame x Intent x Gender	-.079	-.505	.156
	.1	.654	.153
Name x Intent x Gender	-.159	-1.46	.109
Blame x Name x Intent x Gender	.034	.22	.156
	-.118	-.77	.153

Table 10 Parameter Estimates for Use of Aggravating Accounts

Parameter	<i>A</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>SE</i>
UseAgg	-.152	-1.44	.106
Blame	.121	.781	.155
	-.139	-.998	.139
Name	.031	.291	.106
Intent	.01	.093	.106
Gender	-.131	-1.24	.106
Blame x Name	.053	.342	.155
	.092	.66	.139
Blame x Intent	.078	.507	.155
	-.12	-.859	.139
Blame x Gender	-.039	-.25	.155
	.081	.578	.139
Name x Intent	.135	1.27	.106
Name x Gender	.204	1.92	.106
Intent x Gender	.01	.096	.106
Blame x Name x Intent	.163	1.05	.155
	.05	.356	.139
Blame x Name x Gender	.042	.269	.155
	.143	1.03	.139

Table 10 Continued

Parameter	<i>A</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>SE</i>
Blame x Intent x Gender	.103	.664	.155
	.054	.387	.139
Name x Intent x Gender	.035	.334	.155
Blame x Name x Intent x Gender	.143	.934	.139
	.122	.876	.139

Table 11 Comparison of Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts

	Factual												Relational											
	Other				Self				Board				Other				Self				Board			
	Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Mitigat- ing	1	1	0	12	4	7	5	6	1	9	1	6	1	6	2	9	5	7	2	8	-	9	1	5
Aggra- vating	2	7	0	7	3	2	2	4	0	7	2	3	0	7	1	8	0	5	1	6	-	8	1	4

example, in Table 12, under the dependency of blame, name, and gender, the odds ratio of a male using an apology or a concession in a factual frame when he was blamed was .52. In contrast, the odd ratio of a female in the same situation was 2.64. Males, then, were half as likely to offer an apology or an excuse in this situation than they were to *not*

Table 12 Log Odds for Use of Mitigating Accounts

Dependency	λ	Odds	$P <$
Blame x Name x Gender			.05
Other x Factual x Male	-.654	.52	
Other x Factual x Female	.971	2.64	
Other x Relational x Male	-.223	.8	
Other x Relational x Female	.207	1.23	
Self x Factual x Male	.451	1.57	
Self x Factual x Female	2.53	12.58	
Self x Relational x Male	.756	2.13	
Self x Relational x Female	2.46	11.7	
Board x Factual x Male	-.528	.59	
Board x Factual x Female	.329	1.39	
Board x Relational x Male	-.416	.66	
Board x Relational x Female	-.261	.77	
Blame x Gender			.05
Other x Male	-.149	.862	
Other x Female	-.548	1.73	
Self x Male	.548	1.73	
Self x Female	2.26	9.54	
Board x Male	-.431	.65	
Board x Female	.086	1.09	
Intent x Name			.01
Intentional x Factual	.26	3.54	
Intentional x Relational	.548	1.73	
Accidental x Factual	.27	1.31	
Accidental x Relational	.501	1.65	

Table 13 Log Odds for Use of Aggravating Accounts

Dependency	λ	Odds	$P <$
Intent x Name x Gender			.05
Intentional x Factual x Male	.278	1.32	
Intentional x Factual x Female	-.186	.83	
Intentional x Relational x Male	-1.35	.26	
Intentional x Relational x Female	-.041	.96	
Accidental x Factual x Male	-.478	.62	
Accidental x Factual x Female	-.734	.48	
Accidental x Relational x Male	-.868	.42	
Accidental x Relational x Female	.642	1..9	
Blame x Intent x Gender			.05
Other x Intentional x Male	-.105	.9	
Other x Intentional x Female	.049	1.05	
Other x Accidental x Male	-.777	.46	
Other x Accidental x Female	-.01	.99	
Self x Intentional x Male	-1.02	.36	
Self x Intentional x Female	-.386	.68	
Self x Accidental x Male	-1.42	.242	
Self x Accidental x Female	.01	1.01	
Board x Intentional x Male	-.713	.49	
Board x Intentional x Female	-.223	.8	
Board x Accidental x Male	-.777	.46	
Board x Accidental x Female	-.223	.8	
Name x Gender			.01
Factual x Male	-.094	.91	
Factual x Female	-.386	.68	
Relational x Male	-1.05	.35	
Relational x Female	-.094	.91	

use this account. Females, though, were well over twice as likely to apologize or offer an excuse for their actions in the same situation. Men were twice as likely to abstain

from mitigating the conflict, whereas women were more than twice as likely to mitigate the conflict. (Table 13 indicates the odds ratios for the use of aggravating accounts.)

The following sections explore in depth the relationships between each of the independent variables on respondents' use of mitigating and aggravating accounts. Odds ratios are discussed for each independent variable, drawing comparisons within and between categories. The chapter concludes with a review of factors influencing the use of mitigating and aggravating accounts.

Naming

Name x Gender

As noted in Tables 7 and 8, naming the conflict as a factual or relational concern was linked to the respondents' use of both mitigating and aggravating accounts.

However, to understand the relationship of naming to account use, this section examines this interaction for the most significant effect: naming x gender. Table 14 indicates the

Table 14 Use of Mitigating & Aggravating Accounts – Name x Gender

	Use of Mitigating	Use of Aggravating
N ₁ G ₁	1.25	.91
N ₁ G ₂	1.73	.68
N ₂ G ₁	1.19	.35
N ₂ G ₂	1.42	.91
N ₁ = Factual Frame		
N ₂ = Relational Frame		
G ₁ = Male		
G ₂ = Female		

log odds of men's and women's responses to factual and relational frames. (Tables 15 and 16 show the frequencies of respondents' use of mitigating and aggravating accounts.) Although the significant interaction effect was only for use of aggravating statements, respondents' use of mitigating statements also sheds light on overall effects of naming and gender on account use. This description provides a picture of mitigating or aggravating effects of the interaction.

A 2x2 factorial ANOVA revealed a significant difference in the numbers of aggravating statements used by men and women in light of different frame types, $F(1, 171) = 8.789, p < .05$. Figure 2 illustrates the interaction effect between gender and frame type. Men used far more aggravating accounts when confronted with a factual frame ($M = 1.222$) than they did when confronted with a relational frame ($M = .222$). Women, though, did the opposite, using far more aggravating accounts when confronted with a relational framing of the event ($M = 1.273$) than a factual framing ($M = .753$). In all, for the two-way interaction of naming and gender on the use of aggravating statements, a significant difference existed in the way men and women reacted to different frame types.

Table 15 Frequency of Use and Non-use of Mitigating Accounts

	Factual												Relational											
	Other				Self				Board				Other				Self				Board			
	Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Use	1	1	0	12	4	7	5	6	1	9	1	6	1	6	2	9	5	7	2	8	-	9	1	5
Non- Use	1	0	1	4	0	3	0	6	1	2	3	5	1	6	1	2	0	6	2	2	-	4	3	2

Table 16 Frequency of Use and Non-use of Aggravating Accounts

	Factual												Relational											
	Other				Self				Board				Other				Self				Board			
	Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent		Intent		Acci- dent	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Use	2	7	0	7	3	2	2	4	0	7	2	3	0	7	1	8	0	5	1	6	-	8	1	4
Non- Use	0	6	1	9	1	8	3	8	2	4	2	8	2	5	2	3	5	8	3	4	-	5	3	3

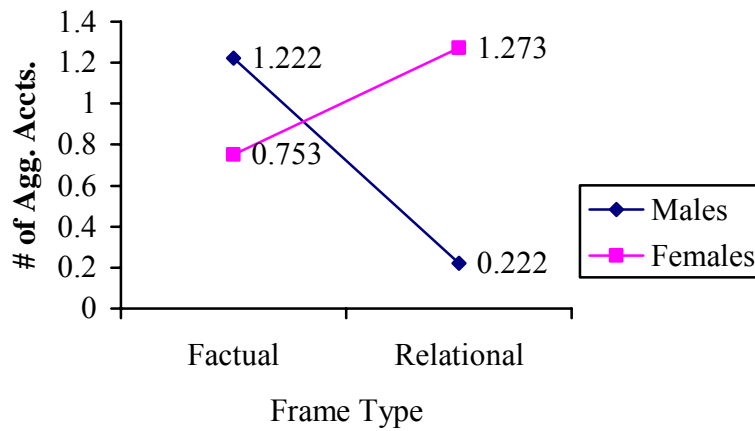


Figure 2 Frequency of Aggravating Accounts --
Name x Gender

The logit data for the above interaction also showed a clear interaction effect between gender and naming on the use of aggravating statements. Although the largest odds for aggravating statements was $o = .91$ for men and women, a comparisons of frame type for both men and women revealed that men were more likely to justify their actions or refuse blame when confronted with a factual framing ($o_{\text{factual, male}} = .91$) rather than a relational framing ($o_{\text{relational, male}} = .35$). In fact, men were more than 2.5 times as likely to use an aggravating account when confronted with a factual rather than a relationship frame. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to use an aggravating statement when faced with a relational framing ($o_{\text{relational, female}} = .91$) instead of a factual framing ($o_{\text{factual, female}} = .68$). Even though the difference between relationship and factual framing is small ($\hat{O} = 1.34$), the data suggested that different frame types influenced aggravating responses from men and women.

This difference in reaction was also visible when considering the respondents' use of mitigating in the same situation. Although men were only slightly more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.05$) to offer an apology or excuse when the conflict was framed factually ($o_{\text{factual, male}} = 1.25$) than relationally ($o_{\text{factual, male}} = 1.19$), the difference was essentially equal. Women, however, were slightly more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.22$) to have used a mitigating statement when faced with a factual frame ($o_{\text{factual, female}} = 1.73$) rather than a relational frame ($o_{\text{factual, female}} = 1.42$). In all, then, although males' use of mitigating statements did not change much between factual and relational frames, their use of aggravating statements more than doubled when confronted with a factual than with a relational frame. Women, though, were slightly more likely to use a mitigating statement when confronted with a factual frame, and were more likely to use an aggravating response when confronted with a relational frame. Although this interaction was fairly consistent, it would be beneficial to examine it in relation to blaming and intentionality.

Blame x Name x Gender

Partial chi square analysis revealed a significant interaction among conflict blaming, naming, and gender on respondent's use of mitigating accounts. Similar to the previous analysis, the researcher examined respondents' use of both mitigating and aggravating accounts to unpack the effects of frame type on account use. The above discussion indicated that men used more aggravating accounts in factual conflicts, and were equally mitigating in relational situations. The relationship held even when considering who was blamed for the conflict. Table 17 indicates the odds ratios for both men and women in this four-way interaction. For men, the likelihood of using

mitigating statements was increased to varying degrees when they were confronted with relational rather than factual frames. For instance, even when male respondents were blamed, they were still 1.54 times as likely to use a mitigating account when the conflict was framed factually ($o_{\text{other, factual, male}} = .52$) rather than relationally ($o_{\text{other, relational, male}} = .8$). That difference decreased to 1.36 when the actor blamed himself or herself. Yet the data suggested that men were more likely to be mitigating when the conflict was framed relationally rather than factually. When a third party was blamed, men were again more likely to be mitigating when faced with a relational frame ($o_{\text{board, relational, male}} = .66$), though the difference was only 1.12 ($o_{\text{board, factual, male}} = .59$). In all, then, men were slightly more likely to use mitigating statements when confronted with relational than factual frames.

The two-way interaction between naming and gender discussed previously suggested that female respondents were more likely to use a mitigating statement when faced with a factual frame, and more likely to use an aggravating statement when faced with a relational frame. When blame was taken into account, the interactions held steady. In women's use of mitigation, female respondents were more likely to apologize or offer an excuse when the conflict was framed factually, no matter who was blamed. Table 17, for example, illustrates that women were twice as likely to offer a mitigating statement when they were blamed and the conflict was framed factually rather than relationally. Similarly, they were 1.81 times as likely to do so when a third party was blamed and a factual frame was used. Although the difference is very small, when the

Table 17 Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts — Blame x Name x Gender

	Use of Mitigating	Use of Aggravating
B ₁ N ₁ G ₁	.52	1.14
B ₁ N ₁ G ₂	2.64	.78
B ₁ N ₂ G ₁	.8	.46
B ₁ N ₂ G ₂	1.23	.91
B ₂ N ₁ G ₁	1.57	.57
B ₂ N ₁ G ₂	12.58	.56
B ₂ N ₂ G ₁	2.13	.45
B ₂ N ₂ G ₂	11.7	1.39
B ₃ N ₁ G ₁	.59	.67
B ₃ N ₁ G ₂	1.39	.58
B ₃ N ₂ G ₁	.66	.42
B ₃ N ₂ G ₂	.77	.82
B ₁ = Blames Respondent		
B ₂ = Blames Self		
B ₃ = Blames Board		
N ₁ = Factual		
N ₂ = Relational		
G ₁ = Male		
G ₂ = Female		

actor accepted blame and used a factual frame, women were 1.08 times as likely to use mitigators rather than aggravators. Though, as suggested earlier, this finding may be a function of the object of blame rather than the framing. Women, then, were more mitigating when perceiving a factual frame rather than a relational frame, no matter who was blamed.

For factual frames, men were more likely to use aggravating responses, no matter who was blamed. For instance, men were 2.48 times as likely to use an aggravating statement when they were blamed and they were confronted with a factual frame ($O_{\text{other, factual, male}} = 1.14$). In fact, the likelihood of male respondents using an aggravating statement with a relational framing when they were blamed was only .46. That is, men

were more than twice as likely to refrain from using an aggravator to have used an one. When the actor blamed himself or herself, male respondents were 1.27 times as likely to use an aggravating statement when hearing a factual frame ($o_{\text{self, factual, male}} = .57$, $o_{\text{self, relational, male}} = .45$). Although the overall likelihood of men using aggravating accounts was only .57, this finding may result from who was blamed, rather than frame type. This difference will be discussed in the section on conflict blaming. When a third party was blamed, male respondents were 1.6 times as likely to use an aggravating response when confronted with a factual ($o_{\text{board, factual, male}} = .67$) rather than relational ($o_{\text{board, relational, male}} = .42$) frame. Similar to the above discussion of men's perception of framing, men were more likely to use aggravating responses in factual situations regardless of who was blamed.

Women use more aggravating accounts in relational conflicts regardless of who was to blame. For instance, when the actor accepted blame and used a relationship frame for discussing the conflict, female respondents were almost 2.5 times as likely to use an aggravating response than if the event was discussed in factual terms ($o_{\text{self, factual, female}} = 1.39$, $o_{\text{self, relational, female}} = .56$). Women were more likely to use aggravating accounts than not when the actor accepted blame with a relationship frame. However, the likelihood of female respondents using aggravating responses when the accuser accepted blame and framed the conflict factually was only .56. That is, women were more likely to abstain from aggravating the situation with a factual frame. When a third party was blamed, women were 1.41 times as likely to use aggravating statements when a person blaming a third party used a factual ($o_{\text{board, factual, female}} = .82$) rather than a

relational frame ($o_{\text{board, relational, female}} = .58$); they were 1.17 times as likely to do so when they were blamed using a factual ($o_{\text{other, factual, female}} = 1.14$) rather than a relational ($o_{\text{other, relational, female}} = .91$) frame. All together, then, women appeared to use mitigators more when a factual frame was used and use aggravators more when a relational frame was used, regardless of who was blamed. Even when blame was considered, the interaction between frame and gender held fairly constant. However, an additional factor to consider was the role of intentionality in this interaction.

Name x Intentionality x Gender

For males and females, the data (see Table 18) suggests that the actor's assessment of intentionality did not significantly alter the interaction of naming and gender on use of mitigating and aggravating accounts. Although the differences were rather small, the data still suggested that men were more likely to use a mitigator when confronted with a relational frame, even if the conflict was labeled an accident ($\hat{O} = 1.2$, $o_{\text{factual, unintentional, male}} = 1.08$, $o_{\text{relational, unintentional, male}} = 1.3$) or intentional ($\hat{O} = 1.06$, $o_{\text{factual, intentional, male}} = 1.44$, $o_{\text{relational, intentional, male}} = 1.49$). Women were 1.32 times as likely to use an apology or an excuse, when a conflict was labeled accidental and was framed factually ($o_{\text{factual, unintentional, female}} = 1.68$) rather than relationally ($o_{\text{relational, unintentional, female}} = 1.3$). Women were 1.54 times as likely to use a mitigating statement when the conflict was seen as intentional and framed factually ($o_{\text{factual, intentional, female}} = 2.46$) rather than relationally ($o_{\text{relational, intentional, female}} = 1.6$). Framing's effects for male and female respondents, then, held constant for the use of mitigating statements when intentionality was taken into account, even though the odds differences were only moderate.

Table 18 Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts – Intent x Name x Gender

Effect	Use of Mitigating Accounts	Use of Aggravating Accounts
$I_1N_1G_1$	1.44	1.32
$I_1N_1G_2$	2.46	.83
$I_1N_2G_1$	1.49	.26
$I_1N_2G_2$	1.6	.96
$I_2N_1G_1$	1.08	.62
$I_2N_1G_2$	1.68	.48
$I_2N_2G_1$	1.3	.42
$I_2N_2G_2$	1.27	1.9
I_1 = Intentional I_2 = Accidental N_1 = Factual N_2 = Relational G_1 = Male G_2 = Female		

The differences for male and female respondents' uses of aggravating statements, though, were more pronounced. When the conflict was termed accidental, males were 1.48 times as likely to use aggravators when framed factually ($o_{\text{factual, unintentional, male}} = .62$) rather than when framed relationally ($o_{\text{relational, unintentional, male}} = .42$). However, when an intentional act was framed factually rather than relationally, men were over 5.0 times as likely to use an aggravating statement ($o_{\text{factual, intentional, male}} = 1.32$. $o_{\text{relational, intentional, male}} = .26$). Women were almost 4.0 times as likely ($\hat{O} = 3.96$) to use an aggravating statement when an accident was framed relationally ($o_{\text{relational, unintentional, female}} = .1.9$) rather than factually ($o_{\text{factual unintentional, female}} = .48$). They were slightly more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.16$) to use an aggravating account when an intentional act was framed relationally ($o_{\text{relational, intentional, female}} = .96$) rather than factually ($o_{\text{factual, intentional, female}} = .83$). In all, assessments of

intentionality did not significantly alter the way female respondents perceived frame type.

The above results indicated significant interaction effects between frame type and gender. Regardless of the assessment of blame or intentionality, males were more likely to use aggravating statements in factual than in relational frames; women, though, were more likely to use aggravators in relational than in factual frames. An examination of differences for use of mitigating and aggravating accounts also indicates that the frame/gender interaction was primarily significant on respondents' use of aggravating statements. Although there were a few differences in the use of mitigating responses for each gender, the most pronounced differences were with males' and females' use of aggravating statements. Conflict blaming also showed differences in respondents' use of mitigating and aggravating statements.

Blaming

An analysis of partial chi squares indicated three interactions related to conflict blaming and the use of mitigation or aggravation: blaming and gender; blaming, naming, and gender; and blaming, intentionality, and gender. The first two interactions were significant for respondents' use of mitigating accounts at the $p < .05$ level. The three-way interaction among blaming, intentionality, and gender, though, was significant at the same level for respondents' use of aggravating statements. Because no chi square value was significant at the $p < .01$ level, this analysis begins with an examination of the simplest of the three interactions: blame and gender. As with the previous discussions of

framings, examining the use of both mitigating and aggravating accounts presents a larger picture of the effects of blaming in this study.

Blame x Gender

Across levels of blame, as shown in Table 19, use of mitigation appeared most likely when the actor accepted blame and least likely when a third party was blamed. Males, for instance, were twice as likely to use a mitigating statement when the actor accepted blame than if the respondents were blamed for the situation. On the one hand, when male respondents were blamed, they were less likely to use a mitigating statement than to not use one ($o_{\text{other, male}} = .862$). On the other hand, they were 1.73 times as likely to use an apology or excuse when the actor ($o_{\text{self, male}} = 1.73$) accepted blame. Men were 2.66 times as likely to apologize or give an excuse when the actor accepted blame than when a third party ($o_{\text{board, male}} = .65$) was blamed.

Table 19 Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts – Blame x Gender

Effect	Use of Mitigating Accounts	Use of Aggravating Accounts
B ₁ G ₁	.862	.82
B ₁ G ₂	1.73	1.06
B ₂ G ₁	1.73	.63
B ₂ G ₂	9.54	.92
B ₃ G ₁	.65	.74
B ₃ G ₂	1.09	.96
B ₁ = Blames Respondent		
B ₂ = Blames Self		
B ₃ = Blames Board		
G ₁ = Male		
G ₂ = Female		

For female respondents, the pattern was similar, but more pronounced. Women were 5.51 times as likely to use a mitigating statement when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, female}} = 9.54$) than when they were blamed for the situation ($o_{\text{other, female}} = 1.73$). Female respondents were even more likely ($\hat{O} = 8.75$) to do so when a third party ($o_{\text{board, female}} = 1.09$) was blamed. In fact, when the actor blamed his or her own self, women were over 9.0 times as likely to use a mitigator than to not use one. When a third party was blamed, women were almost equally likely ($\hat{O} = 1.09$) to use or not use a mitigating statement. The results indicated that mitigation was most likely when the actor accepted blame, somewhat likely when the respondent was blamed, and least likely when a third party was blamed. The results of the blame/gender interaction also suggested that women were more inclined to use mitigating strategies than were men. Women were twice as likely as men to apologize or give an excuse when the respondent was blamed, 5.51 times as likely when the actor accepted blame, and 1.68 times as likely when a third party was blamed.

A relationship between blaming and use of aggravating accounts was also evident, but not to the same extent as mitigating statements. Regardless of gender, respondents were least likely to use an aggravating statement when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, male}} = .63$, $o_{\text{self, female}} = .92$), and equally likely when respondents were blamed ($o_{\text{other, male}} = .82$, $o_{\text{other, female}} = 1.06$) or when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, male}} = .74$, $o_{\text{board, female}} = .96$). Additionally, a single-factor (1x3) analysis of variance indicated that total numbers of aggravating responses (see Table 9) used across genders varied significantly by who was blamed, $F(2, 177) = 6.339$, $p < .0125$, $r^2 = .067$. An LSD post

hoc test revealed a significant difference in numbers of aggravations used when the respondent was blamed than when the actor or a third party was blamed. Consistent with the findings of the logit analysis, respondents made the most frequent use of aggravating accounts when they were blamed; they used the fewest accounts when the actor took the blame.

Additionally, and curiously, just as women were more likely than men to use mitigating statements across all blame types, the results suggested that women were also more likely than men to use aggravating statements as well. Yet, the relationship between females and use of aggravating statements was weaker than that involving mitigating statements. Women ($o_{\text{other, female}} = 1.06$) were 1.29 times as likely as men ($o_{\text{other, male}} = .82$) to use an aggravating statement when they were blamed, 1.46 times as likely ($o_{\text{self, female}} = .92$, $o_{\text{self, male}} = .63$) when the actor accepted blame, and 1.3 times as likely ($o_{\text{board, female}} = .96$, $o_{\text{board, male}} = .74$) when a third party was blamed. Coupled with the findings from the respondents' use of mitigation, the results suggest that women used *both* mitigation and aggravation. Such a result is likely, considering the blameworthiness of both parties in this conflict scenario. What is of note, however, is the magnitude of difference between male and female use of mitigating and aggravating accounts. Odds of using mitigation varied to a greater extent due to gender differences ($\hat{O}_{\text{other}} = 2$, $\hat{O}_{\text{self}} = 5.51$, $\hat{O}_{\text{board}} = 1.68$) than did the use of aggravation ($\hat{O}_{\text{other}} = 1.29$, $\hat{O}_{\text{self}} = 1.46$, $\hat{O}_{\text{board}} = 1.3$).

In addition to the relationship of blame to mitigation, the results suggest that, although respondents were likely to use both mitigation and aggravation, respondents

were *more* likely to use mitigating statements, a result borne out by the frequencies of each account type. In general, then, respondents were more likely to employ mitigating statements and least likely to use aggravating ones when the actor accepted blame for the situation. In contrast, respondents were least likely to use mitigating remarks and most likely to use aggravators when a third party was blamed. To see if this pattern remained constant in relation to other variables, this analysis examines the effects of naming on the blame/gender relationship.

Blame x Name x Gender

Given the effects of naming and gender discussed in the previous section, the odds of a male respondent using a mitigating statement should be highest when the actor accepted blame and used a relational frame, and lowest when he or a third party was blamed and a factual frame was used. The results, as were seen in Table 17, indicated that this was the case. Men were more likely to apologize or excuse themselves when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, factual, male}} = 1.57$, $o_{\text{self, relational, male}} = 2.13$), and least likely to do so when either the participant ($o_{\text{other, factual, male}} = .52$, $o_{\text{other, relational, male}} = .8$) or a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, factual, male}} = .59$, $o_{\text{board, relational, male}} = .66$). The stable effect of framing on the blame/gender interaction was also evident. Males again were more likely to mitigate the situation when a relational frame was used than when a factual frame was used.

For female respondents, the odds of using a mitigating statement should be highest when the actor accepted blame and used a factual frame. In contrast, the odds of women using a mitigating statement would be lowest when a third party was blamed and

a relational frame was used. Women were 12.58 times as likely to use a mitigating statement ($o_{\text{self, factual, female}} = 12.58$) than to refrain from doing so when the actor accepted blame and discussed the conflict in terms of factual issues. On the contrary, women were more likely to *refrain* from using a mitigating statement than to use one when a third party was blamed and the conflict was discussed in terms of relationship issues ($o_{\text{board, relational, female}} = .77$). In fact, similar to the above discussion, women were most likely to be mitigating when the actor accepted blame and framed the conflict factually ($o_{\text{self, factual, female}} = 12.58$, $o_{\text{self, relational, female}} = 11.7$), and least likely when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, factual, female}} = 1.39$, $o_{\text{board, relational, female}} = .77$). These results suggested that, although women were more likely to use a mitigating statement than not, they were *most* likely to do so when the actor accepted blame.

A similar pattern emerged regarding the participants' use of aggravating statements. Men were least likely to use aggravating accounts when the actor accepted blame in a relational ($o_{\text{self, relational, male}} = .45$) rather than a factual ($o_{\text{self, factual, male}} = .57$) frame. They were more likely to do so when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, relational, male}} = .42$, $o_{\text{board, factual, male}} = .67$). Men, though, were most likely to employ aggravating responses when they were personally blamed and a factual frame was used ($o_{\text{other, factual, male}} = 1.14$). Yet, when a relational frame was used, the odds of using a mitigating statement plummeted ($o_{\text{board, relational, male}} = .46$). The results indicated that, although blame still played an important role in the likelihood of using aggravating statements, framing, perhaps, played a more direct and a more salient role. This determination was especially likely for the women's use of aggravating statements.

Although the results from the name/blame/gender interaction implied that aggravation should be least likely when the actor accepted blame, the results indicated that women were *most* likely ($o_{\text{self, relational, female}} = 1.39$) to use aggravating accounts when an actor accepted blame in a relational frame. In fact, compared to a factual frame, women were 2.48 times as likely to employ aggravating statements when an actor accepted the blame in a relational frame. The results showed that blame was related more to mitigation whereas frame was associated with aggravation. To test this premise, this study examined the relationship of blaming, intentionality, and gender on the use of mitigation and aggravation. If the conclusion is true, then mitigation would be most likely for men and women when the actor accepted blame, whereas aggravation would be least likely for both in the same situation.

Blame x Intentionality x Gender

To examine this relationship, the odds of using mitigation for men and women were compared to the assessed intentionality of the conflict. Table 20 indicates the odds likelihood of using mitigation and aggravation. When the conflict was seen as intentional by the actor, male respondents were most likely to use mitigating accounts when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, intentional, male}} = 1.63$) and least likely when either the men were blamed ($o_{\text{other, intentional, male}} = 1$) or a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, intentional, male}} = 1$). For females, the same pattern was observed. Females were most likely to apologize or excuse their actions when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, intentional, female}} = 3.41$), less likely to do so when the women were blamed ($o_{\text{other, intentional, female}} = 1.34$) and least likely

Table 20 Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts – Blame x Intent x Gender

	Use of Mitigating	Use of Aggravating
B ₁ I ₁ G ₁	1	.9
B ₁ I ₁ G ₂	1.34	1.05
B ₁ I ₂ G ₁	.79	.46
B ₁ I ₂ G ₂	1.26	.99
B ₂ I ₁ G ₁	1.63	.36
B ₂ I ₁ G ₂	3.41	.68
B ₂ I ₂ G ₁	1.06	.242
B ₂ I ₂ G ₂	3.13	1.01
B ₃ I ₁ G ₁	1	.49
B ₃ I ₁ G ₂	1.15	.8
B ₃ I ₂ G ₁	.69	.46
B ₃ I ₂ G ₂	1	.8
B ₁ = Blames Respondent		
B ₂ = Blames Self		
B ₃ = Blames Board		
I ₁ = Intentional		
I ₂ = Unintentional		
G ₁ = Male		
G ₂ = Female		

to do so when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, intentional, female}} = 1.15$). Similar to the above, then, mitigation was most likely when the actor accepted the blame.

When the conflict was named accidental by the actor, a similar pattern held.

Male respondents were most likely to use mitigating remarks when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, unintentional, male}} = 1.06$) and least likely to do so when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, unintentional, male}} = .69$). Women were likely to act in the same way. The odds of a female respondent using a mitigating account were greatest when the actor accepted blame ($o_{\text{self, unintentional, female}} = 3.13$) and least likely when a third party was blamed ($o_{\text{board, unintentional, female}} = 1$). For intentionality, then, a pattern of mitigating use similar to the blame/gender and the blame/name/gender interactions was observed.

For the use of aggravation, a similar pattern was observed. Women were least likely to use an aggravating account when the actor accepted blame ($O_{\text{self, intentional, female}} = .68$) and most likely to do so when the respondents were blamed ($O_{\text{other, intentional, female}} = 1.05$). Interestingly, though, a slight variation occurred when the actor saw the conflict as accidental. For males, the pattern remained the same. Males were least likely to use aggravating remarks when the actor accepted blame ($O_{\text{self, unintentional, male}} = .242$) and most likely to do so either when the respondents or a third party was blamed ($O_{\text{board/other, unintentional, male}} = .46$). For females, when the actor blamed either himself/herself, though, the odds of the respondents using an aggravating account was equally likely ($O_{\text{other, unintentional, female}} = .99$; $O_{\text{self, unintentional, female}} = 1.01$). In fact, when a third party was blamed, the odds of females using an aggravating account only decreased to .88, ($O_{\text{board, unintentional, female}} = .88$). When the actor labeled the conflict as accidental, then, the mitigating/aggravating pattern that occurred previously was held constant. Reasons for the possible rise in odds of female respondents using aggravating statements when the conflict was labeled accidental are explored in the next section.

In all, then, the results for conflict blaming seem consistent with the previous literature on responses to perceived blameworthiness. Respondents were more likely to use mitigators and least likely to use aggravators when the person confronting them accepted the blame for the conflict. On the contrary, they were least likely to apologize and most likely to deny guilt or to justify their actions when either they or a third party was blamed. Gender, also, played an important role in using mitigating and aggravating accounts. Specifically, females were more likely than males in most situations to

mitigate the situation. Also, curiously, they were more likely than males in almost all situations to *aggravate* the situation. This result can be explained by the fact that people were not constrained to using only one account type or another. Often, people used multiple accounting strategies to manage their faces and the other party's face at the same time.

Just as naming related to the respondents' use of aggravating accounts, blaming was linked to using mitigating accounts. The odds ratios indicated that most of the variance for locus of blame could be observed in respondents' likelihood to mitigate the situation. Although variance existed in the use of aggravating statements, the magnitude of variance was not as consistent as it was when examined in light of the respondents' use of mitigating statements. The following section explores the relationship between attributed intentionality and respondents' use of mitigating and aggravating accounts.

Intentionality

Previous discussions of naming and blaming focused on the interactions between gender and the use of mitigating and aggravating accounts. Partial chi square analyses for both types of accounts, though, showed no low-order significant effects for the interaction between intentionality and gender. Instead, a significant interaction was observed between intentionality and framing on respondents' use of mitigating statements. In fact, of the three significant interactions, the intentionality/framing was the only one related to the respondents' use of mitigating statements. The others – blaming/intentionality/gender and intentionality/framing/gender – were associated with

the use of aggravating statements. This analysis examines the intentionality/framing interaction as a foundation for assessing the other higher-order interactions.

Intentionality x Frame

Whereas naming appeared to be closely related to the respondents' use of aggravation, the actor's assessment of intentionality was related to their use of mitigation. Table 21 shows the odds for the use of mitigation and aggravation when naming and intentionality were considered. When the conflict was judged to be intentional and was factually framed, respondents were 2.7 times as likely to mitigate the situation ($o_{\text{intentional, factual}} = 3.54$) versus when it was seen as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, factual}} = 1.31$). Although the discrepancy was much smaller, conflicts viewed as intentional were also more likely to be mitigated when a relational frame was used ($o_{\text{intentional, relational}} = 1.73$) than if it was viewed as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, relational}} = 1.65$). In fact, an independent-samples t-test on the differences in concessions used based on attributed intentionality revealed a significant relationship, $t(178) = 2.637, p < .01$. Concessions were more likely when the actor saw the conflict intentionally ($M = 1.01, SD = 1.1$) than

Table 21 Use of Mitigating and Aggravating Accounts – Intent x Name

	Use of Mitigating	Use of Aggravating
I ₁ N ₁	3.54	1.04
I ₁ N ₂	1.73	.54
I ₂ N ₁	1.31	.59
I ₂ N ₂	1.65	.89
N ₁ = Factual		
N ₂ = Relational		
I ₁ = Intentional		
I ₂ = Unintentional		

when it was viewed accidentally ($M = .62$, $SD = .88$). The t-test as well as the observed odds indicated that conflicts perceived as intentional were more likely to be mitigated than were conflicts seen as accidental.

When the use of aggravating accounts was considered, the relationship was not as strong. When the conflict was framed relationally, use of aggravation was less likely than when the conflict was seen as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, relational}} = .54$) and not accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, relational}} = .89$). Respondents were 1.65 times as likely to use an aggravating statement when the conflict was believed to be accidental rather than intentional. However, when the conflict was named factually, the relationship inverted. Just as mitigation was more likely when the conflict was seen as intentional, aggravation was also most likely ($o_{\text{intentional, factual}} = 1.04$). In fact, the odds of using aggravation when the conflict was seen as intentional rather than accidental ($o_{\text{intentional, factual}} = .59$) increased by 1.76 times. The failure to observe a distinct pattern of relationship among naming, intentionality, and aggravation might stem from the relationship between naming and aggravation. Therefore, the failure to find a coherent pattern might arise from the use of frame type and only partially from assessments of intentionality.

Intentionality x Name x Gender

The intentionality/naming/gender interaction on respondents' use of aggravating accounts also suggested that naming, not intentionality, was primarily responsible for changes in aggravation odds. For example, recall Table 18 in which the odds of aggravation and mitigation were given for this interaction. Odds of aggravation were highest for males, regardless of the intentionality, if the conflict was framed factually

rather than relationally. For females, the opposite was true. Thus, the naming/gender interaction was still quite evident, despite attributions of intentionality. Variations of intentionality, though, did reveal a coherent pattern. For example, the odds of females having used an aggravating statement in a factually-framed conflict was 1.73 times greater when the actor viewed the conflict as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, factual, female}} = .83$) and not accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, factual, female}} = .48$). For men, then same pattern was observed. The odds of males using an aggravating account when the conflict was framed factually was twice as great ($\hat{O} = 2.12$) when the conflict was seen as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, factual, male}} = 1.32$) than when it was seen as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, factual, male}} = .62$).

If attributions of intentionality played a primary role in the use of aggravation, though, the same pattern would have held for the scenarios in which the conflict was framed relationally for both men and women. In fact, the pattern did not. Females were almost twice as likely ($\hat{O} = 1.98$) to use aggravating approaches when the situation was cast as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, relational, female}} = 1.9$) rather than intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, relational, female}} = .96$). Males were also more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.62$) to be aggravated with a relational frame when the conflict was perceived by the actor as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, relational, male}} = .42$) rather than intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, relational, male}} = .26$).

The results suggested that naming had a stronger relationship than did intentionality to the respondents' use of aggravation. If intentionality were more important, the relationship would not have inverted as it did between frame types. As a result, naming might play a more direct role than intentionality in people's use of aggravation.

With mitigating responses, a more direct pattern emerged. Across all situations of the intentionality/naming/gender interaction, respondents were more mitigating when the conflict was cast as intentional rather than accidental. Males, for instance, were 1.33 times more likely to mitigate a factually-framed conflict when it was cast as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, factual, male}} = 1.44$) rather than accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, factual, male}} = 1.08$). Though they were only 1.15 times as likely to do so when the conflict was framed relationally, the direction of the intentionality/mitigating relationship was still consistent. Females, also, were more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.46$) to mitigate a factually-framed conflict when it was seen as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, factual, female}} = 2.46$), not accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, factual, female}} = 1.68$). Mitigation was also more likely ($\hat{O} = 1.26$) when the actor labeled a relationally-framed conflict as intentional ($o_{\text{intentional, relational, female}} = 1.6$) rather than as accidental ($o_{\text{unintentional, relational, female}} = 1.27$).

The influence of intentionality on account types, then, depended largely on which accounts were presented. A fairly coherent relationship existed between mitigation and intentionality as evidenced by the consistent pattern of likelihood ratios across changes to intentionality, as well as the independent-samples t-test. However, a less clear relationship existed between aggravation and intentionality. Although a clear relationship among frame-type, attribution of intentionality, and aggravation existed, the pattern was still murky. Further examination of the relationship between naming and intentionality emanated from an analysis of the blaming/intentionality/gender interaction.

Intentionality x Blame x Gender

Partial chi square analysis revealed a significant relationship between the intentionality/blaming/gender interaction and respondents' use of aggravating and mitigating statements. Table 17 indicated a tenuous and unstable relationship between the likelihood odds of respondents' use of aggravation and mitigation. When respondents were blamed, both males and females were more likely to be aggravated when the conflict was seen as intentional ($o_{\text{other, intentional, male}} = .9$; $o_{\text{other, intentional, female}} = 1.05$) rather than accidental ($o_{\text{other, unintentional, male}} = .46$; $o_{\text{other, unintentional, female}} = .99$). However, although the odds change for males was significant ($\hat{O} = 1.96$), the change for females was virtually non-existent ($\hat{O} = 1.06$). Similarly when a third party was blamed, both male and female respondents were equally likely to use an aggravating account, whether the conflict was seen as intentional ($o_{\text{board, intentional, male}} = .49$; $o_{\text{board, intentional, female}} = .8$) or unintentional ($o_{\text{board, unintentional, male}} = .46$; $o_{\text{board, unintentional, female}} = .8$). In fact, when the actor took the blame for the situation, the relationship was even less clear. Males were 1.49 times as likely to use an aggravator when the conflict was cast as intentional ($o_{\text{self, intentional, male}} = .36$; $o_{\text{self, unintentional, male}} = .242$). Females though, were 1.49 times as likely to use an aggravating account in the *opposite* situation ($o_{\text{self, intentional, female}} = .68$; $o_{\text{self, unintentional, female}} = 1.01$). Perhaps male respondents were more frustrated with the actor for starting a conflict, and females were more frustrated when they perceived the actor as not owning up to his or her mistakes. In all, though, a clear relationship between attribution of intentionality and respondents' use of aggravation did not emerge.

However, an interesting interaction emerged when examining the *amount* of aggravating accounts used by participants across blame. A factorial 2 (intentionality) x 2 (respondent gender) x 3 (conflict blaming) factorial ANOVA revealed a significant difference attributed to this relationship, $F(2, 152) = 4.433, p = .013, r^2 = .222$. (With the Bonferroni correction discussed in the previous chapter lowering the significant p value to .0125, the result was almost significant.) The data, shown in Figures 3 – 5, indicated a clear interaction effect between intentionality and gender across locus of blame. When respondents were blamed, males used more aggravating accounts when the conflict was cast as intentional rather than unintentional. Females, on the other hand, used more aggravating accounts when the conflict was cast as unintentional. When the actor accepted the blame, the interaction was consistent, with males being aggravated more when the conflict was cast as intentional, and females being aggravated more when it was cast as accidental. However, when a third party was blamed, the interaction flipped. Males used more aggravating accounts when the conflict was cast as *unintentional*, whereas females used more aggravation when it was cast as intentional. Consistent with the previous findings, fewer aggravating accounts were used when the actor took the blame, and slightly more were used when the respondents were blamed. The interactions, though, lead to an interesting addition.

Although females were equally likely to use an aggravating account when they were blamed and the conflict was seen either intentional or accidental, they used *more*

aggravation when the conflict was cast as unintentional. For males, not only were they more likely to use an aggravating statement when the conflict was cast as unintentional,

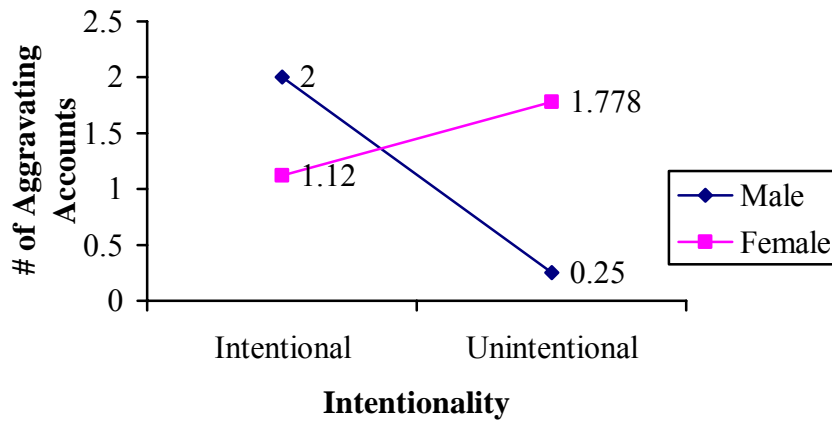


Figure 3 Frequency of Aggravating Accounts -- When Actor Blamed Respondent

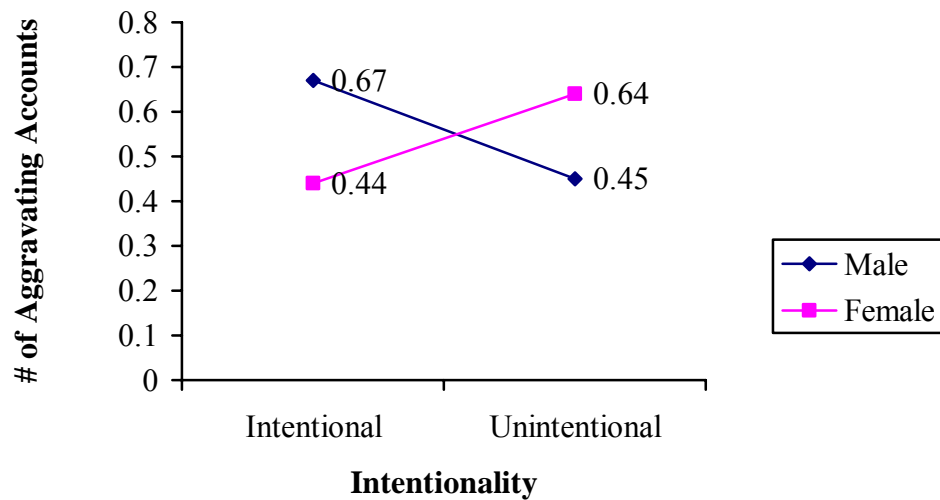


Figure 4 Frequency of Aggravating Accounts -- When Actor Accepted Blame

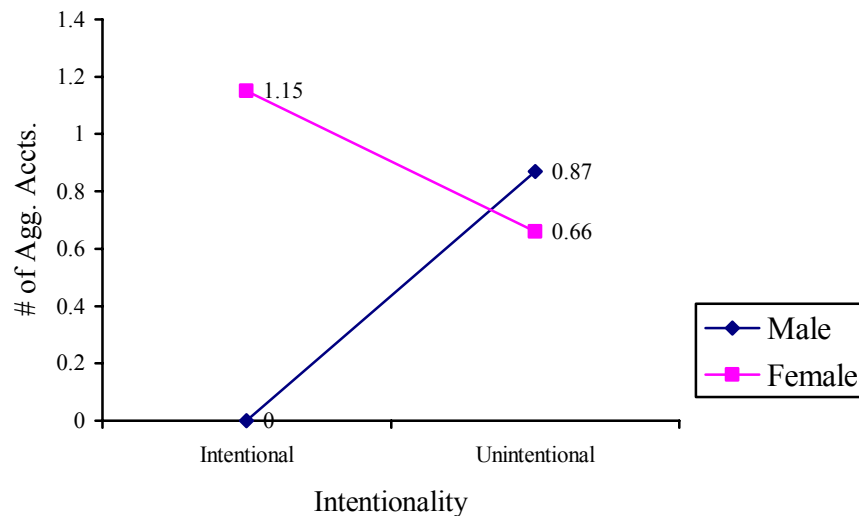


Figure 5 Frequency of Aggravating Accounts -- When Actor Blamed Board

they were likely to use *more* aggravation if it was named accidental. When a third party was blamed, although the odds of likelihood remained consistent, men used more aggravation when the conflict was unintentional, whereas women used more when the conflict was intentional. When the actor accepted blame, males were more likely to use an aggravator in both an intentional and accidental situation. The opposite was true for females.

The implications were somewhat mixed. Blaming played a partial role in the aggravation process, as discussed in the previous section. Not only were fewer aggravating comments made when the actor accepted blame, but also the likelihood of a respondent using an aggravating comment was lowest as well. However, intentionality was a key variable, especially in light of its interaction with gender. The data indicated that males and females were likely to use aggravation with attributions of intentionality,

with males aggravated more by intentional conflicts and females aggravated more by accidental conflicts. Although that pattern did not hold when a third party was blamed; hence, this finding might be a function of the blaming rather than the naming of the conflict. In all, females were more likely to use an aggravating remark when perceiving an accident whereas males were more likely to use an aggravator when perceiving an intentional conflict.

For mitigation, an interesting pattern also emerged. In all situations, conflicts seen as intentional were more likely to be mitigated than those seen as accidental. Even though these odds changes were small, (ranging from 1.06 to 1.54), the direction of the relationship was still consistent.

Overall, then, the relationship between attributed intentionality and respondents' use of mitigating and aggravation depended on which account type was being used. Mitigation and intentionality had stable – if, at times, weak – relationships. Conflicts seen as intentional were more likely to be mitigated than were conflicts that were seen as accidental. Aggravation and intentionality, though, had an unclear relationship that depended on the respondent's gender. Males were more aggravated by intentional conflicts, whereas females were more aggravated by accidental conflicts. Thus, other variables, that is, naming, blaming, and gender, mediated the role of intentionality on the use of account types.

Summary

Three significant four-way interactions and three significant three-way interactions were observed in the partial chi-square analyses. Respondents' use of

mitigating approaches was related to interactions among blaming, naming, and gender; blaming and gender; and naming and intentionality. Uses of aggravation were linked to interactions among naming, intentionality, and gender; blaming, intentionality, and gender; and naming and gender. The three respective interactions had a good fit to the data, as indicated by a non-significant goodness-of-fit test. Conflict naming was related to aggravating more than to mitigating accounts, primarily through its interaction with gender. Conflict blaming was linked to mitigating rather than to aggravating accounts, also observable through its interaction with gender. Attributions of intent had a small but coherent relationship with mitigating accounts, as well as a gender-mediated relationship with aggravating accounts. No main effects were observed for intentionality, blaming, or naming. Gender was important when viewed in context with the previous three variables. In all, significant and coherent relationships were observed among the four independent variables and respondents' use of mitigation and aggravation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results discussed in the previous chapter indicate that a significant relationship exists between conflict framing and account behavior. This chapter offers explanations for those observations in light of the hypothesized relationships discussed in Chapter II. Additionally, this chapter examines some implications and limitations of the study and suggests future directions for the examination of the framing-accounting relationship.

Independent Variables

The results indicate that all stages of issue development, as well as the respondent's gender, have strong relationships with the use of mitigation and aggravation. Conflict naming has a strong relationship with aggravating accounts, blaming has a strong relationship with mitigating accounts, attributed intent has a stable relationship with mitigating accounts, and gender is important only when interacting with the other stages of conflict definition. The following discusses these findings in more depth.

Naming

Because of the interactions between naming and gender, the results did not support the proposed hypotheses (1a and 1b) for main effects. Since there was minimal previous literature on which to base the framing-account relationship, this study expected that women would use mitigators in relationally framed conflicts whereas men would use mitigators for factual conflict. Women, however, used more aggravating

accounts especially when they perceived a relational frame. Yet, they used more mitigating accounts when they perceived a factual frame. In contrast, men were more likely to employ aggravators in a factual conflict, and were more likely to use mitigators in a relational conflict. Even when considering locus of blame and intentionality, this relationship was still evident.

The results point to an interesting phenomenon. The (stereo)typical line of thought in Western culture is that women are acculturated to be more attuned to relational concerns and the needs of others, whereas men are socialized to be more focused on task issues (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). As such, in a relational conflict, women were expected to use mitigators to restore order to the relationship. Yet, this hypothesis proved false. Without being gender stereotypic, it is difficult to explain the clear differences in reactions. Perhaps women are frustrated by interpersonal conflicts because they are trained to be focused on the tasks at hand (Eagly & Johnson). As such, women may perceive any discussion of relationship problems not only as a hindrance to doing their jobs but also as a gender stereotype which they are trying to overcome. Men, on the contrary, clearly used more mitigating accounts in response to relational frames. Perhaps men, responding to the stereotypes as completely task-focused, want to show that they are relationally competent by using more mitigators.

Each gender, though, responded quite differently to factual frames. Men may perceive a threat to their task-performance ability when the confrontation involves discussion of objective conflict factors. Thus, they may assert their innocence or justification to keep their reputations intact. Women, though, may experience a higher

concern for the other's task frustrations, and respond accordingly (Gonzales et al., 1992). Eagly and Johnson's (1990) meta-analysis indicates that women in leadership positions display concern for how others approach various tasks, as evidenced by their general affinity for democratic decision-making processes. Thus, use of mitigation may represent women's concern for the other's ability to carry out their assigned tasks.

The results point to the importance of considering an organization's cultural norms when responding to conflict. Though societal forces may encourage heightened sensitivity to task or relationship concerns, organizational norms of task accomplishment may exert a counter-force. Individuals respond to a variety of pressures (such as task and relational pressures) when accounting for their actions and attempting to restore their public image (Benoit & Brinson, 1994). Individuals need to account for a variety of audiences, such as the immediate other, a superior, or the board, when responding to an organizational conflict (Lee, Woeste, & Heath, 2004). Perhaps men and women hold different levels of salience for different audiences when constructing their responses. Perhaps men and women are responding to different organizational and social pressures in their accounts. With so many variables and pressures, the influence of the framing-gender relationship on account behavior is more striking.

These results indicate a strong relationship between framing and the use of aggravating accounts. Even though the results are consistent, they raise more questions than they answer. Why was there such a stable relationship between gender and framing? What cultural forces did respondents perceive when constructing their accounts? What concerns are salient to staff personnel of nonprofit organizations?

Future research should attempt to address these questions to uncover a deeper understanding of the gender-naming relationship for account behavior.

Blaming

Based on previous research on attribution theory and account behavior, this study predicted that individuals would be more likely to use a mitigating statement when the recipient accepted blame or blamed a third party (H 2b), and would be more likely to use an aggravating statement when the recipient blamed the other (H 2a). The results partially support these hypotheses. As expected, aggravating accounts are most likely used when respondents are blamed for the situation (H 2a). Individuals may feel a compelling need to offer a competing interpretation of the conflict when they perceive a face threat (Hearit, 1994; Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). This competing interpretation comes in the form of justifications and refusals, which are typically aggravating. Also as expected, mitigating accounts are most likely to be used when the respondent blames him or herself (H 2b). Respondents may perceive a smaller face threat from the other, and thus attend to the other person's face by stating that they share the blame for the conflict. Additionally, the use of mitigation gives the general and desired impression of being likeable, competent, and polite (Tyler, 1997).

These results fit past research findings on attribution and rebuke (Braaten et al., 1993; Sillars, 1980a; Sillars, 1980b; McLaughlin et al., 1983). However, they run counter to Schlenker and Darby's (1981) observation that mitigation is more likely when individuals perceive high responsibility for a failure event. The discrepancy, though, is expected when considering the circumstances of the findings. In their study, the

accounters were the only ones to commit a failure event. As such, they may not feel the pressure to apologize. Yet, when each individual in a conflict accepts partial blame, he or she will use an apology or excuse, which mitigate the situation (Kottler, 1994; Sillars, 1980a). Individuals may feel the typical pressure to reciprocate the mitigating strategy that the party person uses. Thus, mitigation by one party may be reciprocated by the other person.

The results also indicate unexpected account behavior. Namely, blaming a third party does not necessarily lead to using mitigating accounts. In fact, blaming a third party had very mixed effects. In some situations (such as when intent is considered), the likelihood of using mitigation parallels when the respondent admits blame. In others (such as when agency and gender are considered), use of mitigating accounts is *less* likely. One explanation may be that blaming the board is not a legitimate action. After all, individuals are more inclined to blame a system when sufficient reason exists to do so (Goldman et al., 2004). If individuals form opinions of what makes a legitimate and competent account (Schonbach, 1990), they may use their current organizational situation as a basis for acceptable explanations. If they see a third party as a legitimate target for blame, they may reject the claim and be less likely to mitigate the situation. Respondents may also think that blaming a third party is a weak attempt to “pass the buck.” That is, blaming a third party may imply that the recipient knows he or she is to blame, but refuses to admit it. As a result, the respondents may see this attempt as shirking responsibility. Thus, they may be more likely to use aggravating accounts, blame the recipient, and refuse to accept responsibility.

Another surprise is the lack of a main effect for blaming. Given past research, blaming should have a direct impact on the odds of mitigating or aggravating the situation. Instead, a stable blaming-gender interaction emerged. This interaction functions similarly to the naming-gender finding. The interaction was consistent in predicting likelihood of mitigation, even when considering naming and perceived intent.

Although this study reports a significant relationship among blaming, perceived intent, and gender, the results of that interaction seem to fit with the lower-order interaction between blaming and gender. The results are interesting considering that attributions of intent are tied strongly with attributions of causality (Sillars, 1980a; Sillars 1980b; Weiner, 1979; Heider, 1958; Thomas & Pondy, 1977). One explanation is that agency is more important than intentionality when individuals account for behaviors. Sillars' findings support such an argument. He found mixed results when examining perceptions of conflict stability on satisfaction, yet found stable results when examining locus of blame (1980a). In other words, perceptions of a conflict behavior as stable (i.e., internal and intentional) or unstable (external and unintentional) did not yield consistent results. However, perceptions of locus of blame did return consistent results. Sillars' findings as well as the findings from this study indicate that individuals may attend more to agency than to intentionality.

Although intentionality may not alter the likelihood of using mitigating accounts, the type of frame does. This study found that conflict naming enhances the interaction of blame and gender. Though this enhancement was modest for men, it was extremely large for women. In fact, the highest likelihood of mitigation occurs when women

perceive that the recipient accepts blame and defines the conflict in factual terms. The second highest odds ratio of mitigation occurs, interestingly, when women perceive a relational frame of the conflict. Thus, having a picture of what the conflict is about increases the odds of apologizing or offering an excuse. That is, people respond better to “I feel hurt by this fact” rather than “I feel hurt.” The results may indicate a convergence of frame definition between recipient and respondent. Such convergence, in turn, leads to a greater likelihood of using mitigating accounts and a greater likelihood of positive conflict management (Drake & Donohue, 1996). However, more research is needed to determine if convergence occurs and if it provides an explanation for the results.

In sum, hypotheses 2a and 2b received partial support. Respondents are more likely to use a mitigating statement when the recipient accepts blame, and are more likely to use an aggravating statement when they are blamed. Blaming a third party, though, does not result in a higher likelihood of using mitigating statements over aggravating statements. Although perceptions of intentionality do not significantly enhance the likelihood of mitigation, naming does increase the odds of using mitigation. Similar to the relationship between frame type and use of aggravating accounts, attribution of agency is related strongly with use of mitigating accounts.

Intentionality

Hypotheses 3a and 3b predicted that individuals would be more likely to respond with mitigating accounts when the recipient labels the conflict as intentional but would be more likely to use aggravating accounts when it is labeled as accidental. The results

somewhat support these hypotheses. Mitigating statements are more likely when the recipient does not attribute the conflict to accidental factors, regardless of the blaming, naming or respondent's gender (H 3a). Attributions of intent are connected to the respondents' use of mitigating rather than aggravating accounts (H 3b).

One explanation for the increased likelihood of mitigating accounts in a conflict perceived to be intentional is that respondents feel a stronger social pressure to answer these accusations. As Coombs and Holladay (2002) assert, "crises with strong attributions of organizational crisis responsibility, such as organizational misdeeds, require strongly accommodative responses such as corrective action and full apologies" (p. 172). If attribution of intent is indeed a vital component when considering image threat (Benoit & Czerwinski, 1997), then claiming that a conflict is accidental reduces the threat to the respondent. These results fit with previous findings on the relationship between account behavior and perceived intent (Gonzales et al., 1990; Gonzales et al., 1992). Individuals could be less motivated to use mitigating statements for a conflict labeled by the other as accidental because they view the situation as non-serious and/or not their fault. If they do not think the situation is serious or that they are not to blame, they could think that apologies are pointless. On the contrary, they may perceive the conflict as more serious if the other person labels it as intentional. They may feel more social pressure to be polite as well as to attend to their own image. As such, conflicts labeled as intentional may elicit more of a mitigating stance from the other.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The initial line of thinking was that both parties could create a "third story" by teaming up to blame a third party if one side blamed that

party for intentionally instigating a conflict. Actors, then, would use more refusals by blaming that third party. However, the data do not support this argument. Individuals are equally likely to use aggravating accounts if a third party is blamed for intentionally or accidentally causing a conflict. Individuals may have difficulty assessing the intent of a third party for a number of reasons, such as lack of familiarity and belief that the third party is not to blame. Additionally, attribution of intent may lose its importance when the locus of blame is not one of the conflict parties. As such, a third party's intent does not play a role people's motivation to use aggravating or mitigating accounts.

In sum, attribution of intent has a stable relationship with use of mitigating accounts. Mitigation is most likely if the recipient labels the conflict as intentional rather than accidental (H 3a). Intent's relationship with aggravating accounts is less clear (H 3b). Intent does not factor into individuals' use of aggravating accounts when a third party is blamed (H 4). Women are more likely to use an aggravating account when they are blamed for an intentional rather than accidental conflict. Men are somewhat less likely to use aggravating accounts when the conflict is labeled as accidental. When the recipient frames the conflict factually, use of aggravation is less likely when the conflict is labeled accidental rather than intentional. However, when the respondent frames the conflict relationally, labeling the conflict as accidental *increases* the likelihood of aggravation. In all, attribution of intent has a consistent relationship with the use of mitigation, and a mixed relationship with use of aggravation.

Gender

Hypotheses 5a and 5b argued that females would be more likely than males to use mitigating accounts, whereas males would be more likely than females to use aggravating accounts. The results partially support hypothesis 5a, but not 5b. Gender is not directly associated with the use of mitigation or aggravation. Instead, gender is relevant only when interacting with blaming, naming, and attributions of intent. In general, females are more likely than males to use mitigating accounts regardless who is blamed. Women are twice as likely to use a mitigating account when they are blamed, five and a half times as likely to do so when the recipient accepts blame, and almost two times as likely to do so when the recipient blames the board. As discussed earlier, the interaction of blaming and gender is quite consistent. Additionally, women were generally more likely to use mitigation than men regardless of attributed intent. Men and women, though, respond quite differently to frame type. Whereas women are more likely to use a mitigating statement when the conflict is framed factually, men are more likely to use a mitigator when the conflict is framed relationally.

Hypothesis 5b, on the other hand, was not supported. Although women are generally more likely than men to use mitigation, they are *also* more likely to use aggravation no matter the attributed agency or intent. This result, though unexpected, is understandable, given the strategic nature of accounts. Hearit (1994), for instance, argues that management of a crisis involves an “attempt to provide a competing interpretation of the act and to label [one’s] wrongdoing in a way that displays sorrow but limits culpability, and use dissociations to distance [oneself] from the wrongdoing”

(p. 122).² When responding to a conflict, then, individuals focus on their own face and the other's face (McLaughlin et al., 1983). People have a number of rhetorical strategies with which to persuade and/or identify with their target audience(s) (Sillince, 2004). Using both mitigating and aggravating accounts provides accounters with the means to limit blame and to display sorrow about the action. By doing so, accounters manage the basic tension between concern for self and concern for other.

In all, gender has a mixed relationship with account behaviors. Though women are more likely than men to mitigate the conflict in some situations, they are less likely to do so in others. Though these results do not shed a clearer light on the relationship between gender and account behavior, they do indicate that gender should be examined whenever account behavior is analyzed. Although there may not be a significant main effect, gender does appear to be related to responses to all stages of conflict framing.

Account Behavior

The results for use of mitigating and aggravating accounts indicate that use of mitigation is generally more likely than use of aggravation. Respondents may feel a social pressure to be polite (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and to attend to the other's concerns (McLaughlin et al., 1983). (A social desirability bias may be present in these findings as well.) Considering that the respondents work for organizations in which working bonds may be closer and relationships may be more important, it stands to reason that individuals may be more likely to use an account strategy which shows

² Though Hearit is discussing *organizational* responses to crises, such responses are similar to individual response behaviors (Allen & Caillouet, 1994). Crises are similar to failure events in that they both signal harm to one's legitimacy (Allen & Caillouet), and public and social reputation (Ice, 1991).

concern for the relationship and the other. They may realize the relational and task implications of aggravating a situation in which they may be required to work closely with the other conflict party. There are a number of factors, though, that make mitigating and aggravating account behaviors more likely.

The likelihood of using mitigation is enhanced by a number of factors. First, acceptance of blame by the recipient increases likelihood of mitigation by the account-giver. Accounters may feel compelled to reciprocate a concern for the other after the recipient shows apparent concern by blaming him or herself. Second, refraining from labeling the conflict as accidental is generally associated with a higher likelihood of using mitigating statements. Respondents may feel a stronger need to excuse or apologize for their actions when the other views the situation as intentional. Third, mitigation is more likely if the conflict is defined factually for females and relationally for males. Respondents may perceive different tensions and concerns, leading to differing responses to frame types.

The likelihood of aggravation also increases with a number of factors. First, aggravation is more likely when the recipient blames the other or a third party. Respondents do not appreciate the face threat when they are blamed, and do not feel compelled to apologize when a third party is blamed. Second, aggravation is more likely when males perceive factual frames and females perceive relational frames of the conflict. As discussed above, factual frames may threaten males' desire to be seen as competent in their work, whereas relational frames may threaten females' desire to be seen as a professional concerned with the task at hand. Third, aggravation is more likely

if relational conflicts are labeled as accidental or factual conflicts are labeled as intentional.

Implications

These findings have a number of implications for theory and research. Theoretically, these results point to a need to reconceptualize how the field currently thinks about accounting behavior. Though a variety of theories address accounting behavior, they typically do not address the crisis from the viewpoint of publics. The closest theory to have done so is Situated Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The theory argues that a “crisis manager begins by the selection of a crisis response strategy by identifying the crisis type, which we conceptualize as the frame that publics use to interpret the event” p. 167 [emphasis added]. Tests of this theory have indicated that three different clusters (frames) of crisis types. In other words, people do identify conflicts and crises in different ways. Coombs and Holladay’s results, along with the results of this study, indicate that theory regarding crisis communication should take publics’ and recipients’ definitional frames into consideration when examining the propriety and effectiveness of account strategies.

Additionally, these findings suggest that current theorizing of conflict framing can expand greatly. Although theories such as communicative framing theory provide a fairly straightforward examination of framing and conflict behavior, these theories may limit the study of framing in conflict as a matter of convergence/divergence, and frame type. These results indicate that, though studies of convergence and frame type are beneficial, a larger view of the framing process can generate additional details of how

parties manage conflict. Theorizing about framing must not be limited to frame type and convergence, nor should it be limited to studies of only one party's framework. Instead, the field should look into the discursive elements of how conflicts begin and evolve over time.

Finally, these results point to a need to further explore the antecedents to the forgiveness process (see Worthington, 1997; McCullough & Worthington, 1994). Current theory has tended to examine forgiveness processes and its antecedents largely from the recipient's perspective. Research (e.g., Girard, Mullet, & Callahan, 2002; McCullough, Rachal, & Worthington, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998) has indicated that mitigating account behaviors (such as apologies) are positively associated with the likelihood of forgiveness. Yet, this research fails to examine the discursive processes (such as issue development framing) that go into attempts to persuade the other about how to define the event in question. Finally, these results call into question certain forgiveness measures such as the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (Berry et al., 2001). Each of the five vignettes involves some type of confrontation between the actor and the recipient. This research has indicated that confrontation is associated with likelihood of mitigating and aggravating behaviors, which are in turn related with forgiveness and unforgiveness. Thus, findings of trait forgiveness with such measures may be confounded by types of confrontations depicted.

In addition to their implications of theory, these results have significant implications for research. First, this study offers a link between the failure event and conflict literatures. Current research examining *only* failure events or *only*

organizational conflicts would do well to consider the research findings of the other field. Second, this research points to the need to examine discursive antecedents of account behavior. Though some studies have examined confrontations and reproach as they relate to use of aggravating accounts (e.g., Braaten et al., 1997), these findings indicate that examining “reproaches” or “rebukes” may not be a fine-grained enough. There are a variety of factors that go into reproaching someone else, as this study has indicated. This study points to the fact that rebukes cannot and should not be treated as monoliths. Third, these findings have important implications for forgiveness research. These results indicate that forgiveness may not be so steeped in trait behavior after all.

Limitations

Though these results have a variety of promising implications, the results must be taken with a grain of salt for a number of reasons. First, the results may not be generalizable to a larger population. Respondents were members of nonprofit organizations, which exhibit a variety of differences from for-profit organizations. Additionally, half of the participating organizations were either human service or health care organizations. It is possible that these organizations have conflict management techniques which are unique to their field. Because this study did not test for differences by type of organization, it is difficult to assess whether organizational differences played a significant role in the results. Also, organizational personnel may behave differently than individuals operating outside of an organization’s culture.

However, there is an increasing blurring of distinctions between nonprofit and for-profit organizations (Emanuele & Higgins, 2000). Individuals who were former

executives of for-profit organizations are frequently turning to the nonprofit world to find work. As such, the distinctions between for-profits and nonprofits may not be as apparent as once believed. Additionally, it should be noted that there were several types of organizations which participated in this study. Although half of the organizations came from two fields, the other half came from a variety of fields. As a result, the variation of fields (36 organizations from 12 fields) may make up for the prominence of two particular fields. Additionally, there is no guarantee that organizations within the same field have similar conflict management habits. Two human service organizations, for instance, may approach conflicts differently depending on their personnel and the leadership styles of their respective directors. As a result, though half of the organizations came from two particular fields, this may not have had a significant effect on the results in and of itself.

A second limitation is the failure to maintain consistency and control in conducting the research. Although the researcher conducted the study in person on a number of occasions, some research packets had to be mailed in order to achieve the desired number of participants and the desired amount of organizational diversity. There was little way to conduct this research in person while the participants were in different regions and states. However, those taking part in the research by mail were given an introduction script identical to the one used when the research was conducted in person. Organizational contacts were given specific details about how to conduct the study sessions and how to protect respondents' confidentiality. Yet, the lack of control and consistency is a clear limitation.

A third limitation is the number of usable responses. Despite the directions read at the start of the research session and at the top of each section, some individuals *described* the conflict rather than *replied* to the conflict. Some also returned blank response pages. These situations reduced the number of usable responses to 178. This number may be too small when working with twenty-four conditions. Yet, despite the smaller-than-desired sample size and the diminished power, the ability to discover significant findings suggests that the findings would be consistent even with a larger sample size.

A fourth limitation was the operationalization of the dependent variables. Use of mitigation and use of aggravation were operationalized as binary variables. Thus, if one individual used 1 mitigating account whereas another used 5, they would be treated equally. Though this may pose a limitation for *magnitude* of mitigation or aggravation, this study was not interested in those results. Rather, the study's focus was on general *likelihood of using* either account type. Magnitude, as will be discussed next, may be examined in future research.

A final limitation relates to the interaction of context and selected medium. Previous work has focused largely on interpersonal failure events occurring in places such as malls whereas this study focused on behavior in organizations. If people's behavior changes as they move from one context to another, these results may not necessarily be generalizable to other contexts. Additionally, people may react differently to confrontations through email, hand-written letters, and face-to-face interaction. These results show how individuals use certain accounts in an

organizational context when confronted with a letter. Research should examine the effects of different contexts and media on account use.

Future Directions

Despite these limitations, the results point to a variety of promising future research directions. First, researchers can continue to explore the relationship between conflict framing and account behavior. This study, as an initial study with a variety of limitations, needs replication to confirm its findings. Researchers can also continue to examine the relationship between discursive shaping of attribution and account behavior. What effect does intentionality have? Does the theorized interaction between agency and intentionality have an effect on account behavior? These questions necessitate answers as we continue to explore accounting behavior.

Second, researchers can explore the discursive antecedents of forgiveness. Current research has treated failure events too simplistically. Rather than examining only one person's perception of a failure event, researchers should examine how the framing and reframing of definitions relate to the likelihood of forgiveness. If confrontation (even *imagined* confrontation) plays a vital part of forgiveness by encouraging empathy and understanding of the other, why have we not examined its relationship to forgiveness?

Third, researchers can explore the effect of conflict framing on multiple account use. This study has treated mitigation and aggravation as simple, binary variables. Yet, research into crisis management has indicated that individuals and organizations use a variety of impression management strategies to restore their public image. What effect

does the use of multiple account types have on perceptions of the actor? Is the use of multiple account types related to some aspect of conflict framing?

Finally, researchers should continue to work on methods of analyzing responses to conflict that minimize crucial biases. Of primary concern is the social desirability bias inherent in this research. Researchers will have a difficult time examining the relationships between framing and accounting as long as participants know that their words will be analyzed by someone else. Will organizational records of disputes provide less biased samples? Are vignettes and the critical incident technique really the most effective ways of analyzing conflict behavior?

Summary

This study has examined a previously neglected field of research into the connection between conflict framing and account behavior. This study has indicated that conflict and failure events share a number of commonalities, such that failure events are the actions that instigate a conflict. This study has applied an issue development lens through which to view account behavior, indicating that mitigation and aggravation can be understood by how much issue convergence each communicates. By examining how variations of conflict naming, blaming, and attributing of intentionality associate with the likelihood of using mitigating or aggravating accounts, this study represents an additional step toward understanding the discursive environment of account behaviors and forgiveness. Despite its limitations, this examination illuminates a variety of implications for theory, current and future research, and practice. Future research should

look to replicate this study to confirm its results and build off of these findings as we work toward more constructive ways of managing organizational conflicts.

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL TAXONOMY OF EXEMPT ENTITIES CODES

<u>Code</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>
A	Arts & Culture	Private nonprofit organizations whose primary purpose is to promote appreciation for and enjoyment and understanding of the visual, performing, folk, and media arts; the humanities (archaeology, art history, modern and classical languages, philosophy, ethics, theology, and comparative religion); history and historical events; and/or communications (film, video, publishing, journalism, radio, television).
B	Education	Organizations whose primary purpose is to educate citizens, support educational institutions, or educate the public regarding specific policies.
E	Health Care	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide health care, including hospitalization, family planning, and health consultation.
F	Mental Health	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide mental health care and to research mental health issues.
G	Diseases & Disorders	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide health services to those dealing with diseases or disorders.
I	Crime & Legal-Related	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide legal services and work to address crime-related issues.
K	Agriculture, Food, & Nutrition	Organizations whose primary purpose is to support the education, growth, and delivery of food and nutrition services.
L	Housing & Shelter Youth	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide and maintain housing and shelter for individuals.
O	Development	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide services for the purpose of enhancing the development of youth.
P	Human Service Organizations	Organizations whose primary purpose is to provide social services (such as rehabilitation, adoption, hospice care) to youth, adults, and families.
S	Community	Organizations whose primary purpose is to educate about

	Improvement & Capacity Building	and engage in projects regarding community improvement (such as block associations, economic development, and business development).
T	Philanthropy, Voluntarism, & Grantmaking Foundations	Organizations whose primary purpose is to support and advocate for the growth of philanthropic (nonprofit) organizations.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Study Cover Page

To protect your anonymity, please do not include your name or other identifying marks on any pages of this study. The information on this page is used to collect demographic data and to match your response to your individual packet. When completed with this packet. Please separate your responses from the first part of this packet.

Age: _____

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Have you had any experience in the corporate sector? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many years total have you worked? _____

If yes, for how many organizations have you worked? _____

Have you had any experience in the government sector? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many years total have you worked? _____

If yes, for how many organizations have you worked? _____

How long have you worked in the nonprofit sector? _____

For how many organizations have you worked as a staff person? _____

How long have you been with this organization? _____

What is your current position? _____

How long have you held this position? _____

Do you volunteer with other organizations? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND SCENARIO

For the past year, Alice and Steve have worked together on the fundraising committee for a local community food pantry that provides meals to the homeless in the area. Alice, who was the first to arrive at the Pantry and the last to leave on most days, had previously served in similar nonprofit organizations in other communities, and she felt she had a good understanding of what the community needed. She was perceived around the organization as not only very committed to the organization in her position as Assistant Director of Finance but also very confident in what she felt was the right course of action. Steve, who is also active in other community groups, had been involved in the organization for a number of years and felt that he had a good understanding of his role in fulfilling the organization's mission. He was typically seen as a fairly friendly person to work with and as a person who knows a great amount about the community, given his extensive service and position as Assistant Director of Community Relations.

The two worked together to create and coordinate various fundraising activities. At first, both worked well together. They quickly formed a nice working partnership that netted a variety of financial growth opportunities. Typically, Steve would use his contact information to find potential donors, with Alice making the actual pitch to the various individuals and corporations. With the organization going through increasing growth, they were able to come up with very creative and successful ideas. However, as their time together lengthened, their situation seemed to deteriorate. Each was becoming frustrated by what they saw as the other one passing off personal responsibilities. Alice was upset that Steve was slowing down work production by arriving late, taking longer breaks, and not returning some phone calls. Steve was upset that Alice was asking him to do more work and apparently trying to be his boss. The board, meanwhile, was asking them to do more work with fewer resources. The organization began to notice a drop-off in the success rate of the fundraisers.

A few days after their latest event raised fewer funds than the organization expected, Alice and Steve confronted each other in the hallway. Alice told Steve that he wasn't doing his job like he should. Steve replied that Alice was piling her work onto him and trying to act like his boss. This type of dialogue continued for about 5 minutes, with each accusing the other of being the chief instigator of the conflict.

Two days later, Alice placed the following letter on Steve's desk.

APPENDIX D

VIGNETTES

Frame Type (Factual, Relational) / Name (Intentional, Unintentional) / Blame (Other, Self, Board)

Factual / Intentional / Other

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I feel that you are not putting in as much work as you had done in the past. Instead, you have been intentionally passing more of your responsibilities off to me. Here is what I am seeing. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged and I have been getting more tasks from you.

These are what I am seeing. Your actions have changed how we do our jobs. I know that you are aware of these problems and are intentionally redefining your job at my expense.

I anticipate your reply.

Factual / Intentional / Self

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I blame myself for this. I realize I was creating the problem by giving

you more work because I did not fully understand the reasons for the changes. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I used to. I am doing much more event planning and contacting sponsors, which you did. I am also always being backlogged, and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. I realize I was wrong, so I accept responsibility and fault for my actions toward you and my misunderstanding of the situation.

I anticipate your reply.

Factual / Intentional / Board

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I do not blame you for this. Instead, I realize the board has created the stress by changing how we work. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged, and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. However, I realize the board's intentional changes – not yours – changed our responsibilities. Our new system seems mostly to blame for these changes.

I anticipate your reply.

Factual / Unintentional / Other

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the

amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I just think you were unaware of how your actions have accidentally affected my work. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I used to. I am doing much more event planning and contacting sponsors, which you did. I am also always being backlogged, and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. However, I don't think you were intentionally trying to redefine your job. Your changes just unintentionally changed the way I was doing my job.

I anticipate your reply.

Factual / Unintentional / Self

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize I was accidentally creating the problem by giving you more work because I did not fully understand the reasons for the changes. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I did last year. I have planned the events that you planned last year. I am also always being backlogged, and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. I realize I was wrong, so I accept responsibility and fault for this accidental misunderstanding.

I anticipate your reply.

Factual / Unintentional / Board

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. But, unfortunately, I've seen a change over time in the amount of work being done, the amount of money being brought in, and the amount of effort being expended.

I originally felt you were shifting your responsibilities to me. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. Instead, I realize the board – not you – unknowingly created the stress by changing how we work. Here was what I saw. I am doing twice as much person-to-person correspondence than I used to. I am doing much more event planning and contacting sponsors, which you did. I am also always being backlogged and I thought I was getting more tasks from you.

These were the facts I was seeing. However, I realize the board's changes – not yours – unintentionally changed our responsibilities. That is, I think our new system is accidentally causing these changes.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Intentional / Other

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I feel that you are the one who is harming our work relationship by your actions. You have been intentionally trying to compete with me rather than work together with me. Here is what I am sensing. I feel that your cold reactions to me have been straining how we relate to each other. I also feel that you are not at all interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

Rather, your resentment of me has constantly been straining our ability to positively work together. It is your intentional competitiveness and disregard for me that is preventing us from having a normal and productive work relationship like everyone else has.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Intentional / Self

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize that I never fully understood why our work relationship had changed. Here was what I was sensing. I at first felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I also did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. However, I realize I was the one hurting our relationship with my actions. So I accept responsibility and fault for causing the strain and competition of our relationship.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Intentional / Board

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize the changes knowingly made by the board have created stress in our work relationship. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. I realize the board, though, is the one hurting our relationship with its actions. This new system is to blame for creating strain and competition in how we relate.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Unintentional / Other

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I just think you were unaware of how you have altered how we work together. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. However, I don't believe you were intentionally disregarding me. You were just unaware of the strain and competition you were accidentally creating for our work relationship.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Unintentional / Self

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize I was accidentally creating the problem by not understanding why our relationship changed. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This was what I felt. I realize I was the one accidentally hurting our relationship with my actions. So I accept responsibility and fault for unintentionally causing the strain and competition of our relationship.

I anticipate your reply.

Relational / Unintentional / Board

Given the recent events between us, I thought it would be best to write you a letter. I want to present my side of the story and the way I see the situation.

When we first started working together last year, we developed ideas together and functioned as a team. You and I coordinated a large number of activities that raised sufficient money for the Pantry. I enjoyed being able to work with you. But, unfortunately, I have sensed a change over time in our relationship.

I originally felt that you were harming our work relationship by trying to compete with me rather than work together. However, I want to let you know that I don't blame you for this. I realize the changes made by the board accidentally caused stress in our work relationship. Here was what I was sensing. I felt that your reactions to me were straining how we relate to each other. I did not feel you were very interested in creating a positive work environment between us.

This is what I was sensing. I realize the board, though, is the one accidentally hurting our relationship with its actions. This new system is to blame for unintentionally creating stress and competition in our work relationship.

I anticipate your reply.

APPENDIX E

MANIPULATION CHECK

Directions: Please circle the appropriate answer to the following questions as you perceived them.

1. To what extent does Alice's letter suggest that she blames herself for the situation?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

2. To what extent does Alice's letter suggest that she blames the board for the situation?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

3. To what extent does Alice's letter suggest that she blames you for the situation?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

4. To what extent does Alice's letter indicate that she sees your actions as intentional?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

5. To what extent does Alice's letter indicate that she sees your actions as unintentional?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

6. To what extent does Alice's letter focus on the objective factors of her job that she sees?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

7. To what extent does Alice's letter focus on the emotional or relational ties between you and her?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

8. To what extent does Alice's reaction parallel what you think a woman might do in this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
To a minimal extent	To a small extent	Somewhat	To a large extent	To a great extent

APPENDIX F

ACCOUNT TAXONOMY (CODING SCHEME)

From Gonzales, M., Manning, D., & Haugen, J. (1992). Explaining our sins: Factors influencing offender accounts and anticipated victim responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 958-971. (Also used in Holtgraves, 1989). (Adapted from P. Schonbach, 1980)

Concession

- C1 Explicit acknowledgment of own responsibility or guilt
 - C1.1 Full confession of guilt without reservations
 - C1.2 Partial confession of guilt, with reservations
- C2 Explicit abstention from excuse or justification; acknowledgment that they are inappropriate
- C3 Expression of regret concerning failure event (commission or omission)
 - C3.1 Expression of regret concerning own responsibility for the failure event
 - C3.2 Expression of regret concerning the consequences of the failure event
- C4 Offers restitution or compensation
 - C4.1 Appeal to restitutions or compensations already performed
 - C4.2 Other restitutions or compensations
- C5 Pleas for forgiveness, or expressed hope for continuation of fruitful relationship
 - C5.1 Expressed hope for restoration or improvement of “victim’s” situation
- C6 Acknowledgment of an appropriate response (e.g., “I should have....”)
- C7 Self reproach for failure event, consequence of failure event, or responsibility for it

Excuse

- E1 Appeal to own human shortcomings
 - E1.1 Appeal to insufficient knowledge or skill
 - E1.2 Appeal to impairment of will
 - E1.3 Appeal to lack of intention (e.g., “I didn’t mean to....”)
- E2 Reasons for appeal to own shortcomings
 - E2.1 Appeal to biological factors (e.g., arousal, fatigue)
 - E2.2 Appeal to illness, addiction, drunkenness
 - E2.3 Appeal to one’s own negative past
 - E2.4 Appeal to provocation by other people
 - E2.5 Appeal to duress by powerful agents
 - E2.6 Appeal to loyalties
 - E2.7 Appeal to the specific external circumstances of the situation
 - E2.7.1 Appeal to accident
 - E2.7.2 Appeal to inability to resist situational pressures
- E3 Appeal to own effort and care before and during the failure event

- E4 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeeds of others as a frame of reference for evaluation
 - E4.1 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeeds of the accuser as a frame of reference
 - E4.2 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeeds of the victim as a frame of reference
- E5 Appeal to the participation of other persons in the failure event
 - E5.1 Appeal to the participation of the accuser in the failure event
 - E5.2 Appeal to the participation of the victim in the failure event
- E6 Appeal for a noncorrespondent reference (e.g., “This isn’t like me...”)

Justification

- J1 Denial of damage
- J2 Minimization of damage
 - J2.1 Minimization of damage in view of circumstances that demanded the failure event
 - J2.2 Appeal to the positive consequences of the failure event
 - J2.3 Minimization of damage to victim in view of consequences for the accused (e.g., “You think you’ve got it bad,” “They think they’ve got it bad...”)
 - J2.4 Appeal to detection or apprehension as cause of negative consequences (e.g., “It wouldn’t be such a big deal if I didn’t get caught...”)
 - J2.5 Minimization of damage in light of possible future improvement
- J3 Appeal to role of the victim
 - J3.1 Using qualities of the victim to justify the damage
 - J3.2 Using acts of the victim to justify the damage
- J4 Appeal to the right of self-fulfillment
 - J4.1 Appeal to the right of self-fulfillment in view of one’s own negative past
- J5 Appeal to loyalties
- J6 Appeal to good intentions
- J7 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeeds of others as a frame of reference for evaluation – offender’s moderation should be acknowledged
 - J7.1 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeed of the accuser as a frame of reference
 - J7.2 Appeal to shortcomings or misdeeds of the victim as a frame of reference

Refusal

- R1 Claiming that the failure event has not occurred
- R2 Explicit refusal of a confession of guilt
- R3 Unrestricted attribution of guilt to others
 - R3.1 Unrestricted attribution of guilt to the accuser
 - R3.2 Unrestricted attribution of guilt to the victim
- R4 Denial of right to approach

- R4.1 Denial of right based on offender's identity or role in relation to the accuser
- R4.2 Denial of right in view of negative qualities or deeds of the accuser
- R4.3 Denial of right in view of negative qualities or deeds of the victim
- R5 Referral to other sources of information
- R6 Evasions or mystifications
- R7 Denial of self as agent of mishap
 - R7.1 Explicit denial of responsibility (e.g., "I didn't do it...")
 - R7.2 Attribution to inanimate object or force (e.g., "The car..." "The computer...")
- R8 Refusal to provide an account, period
- R9 Refusal to provide an account or restitution because the failure event occurred in the past and is unalterable (e.g., "It's done, and there's nothing I can say or do now....")

VITA

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